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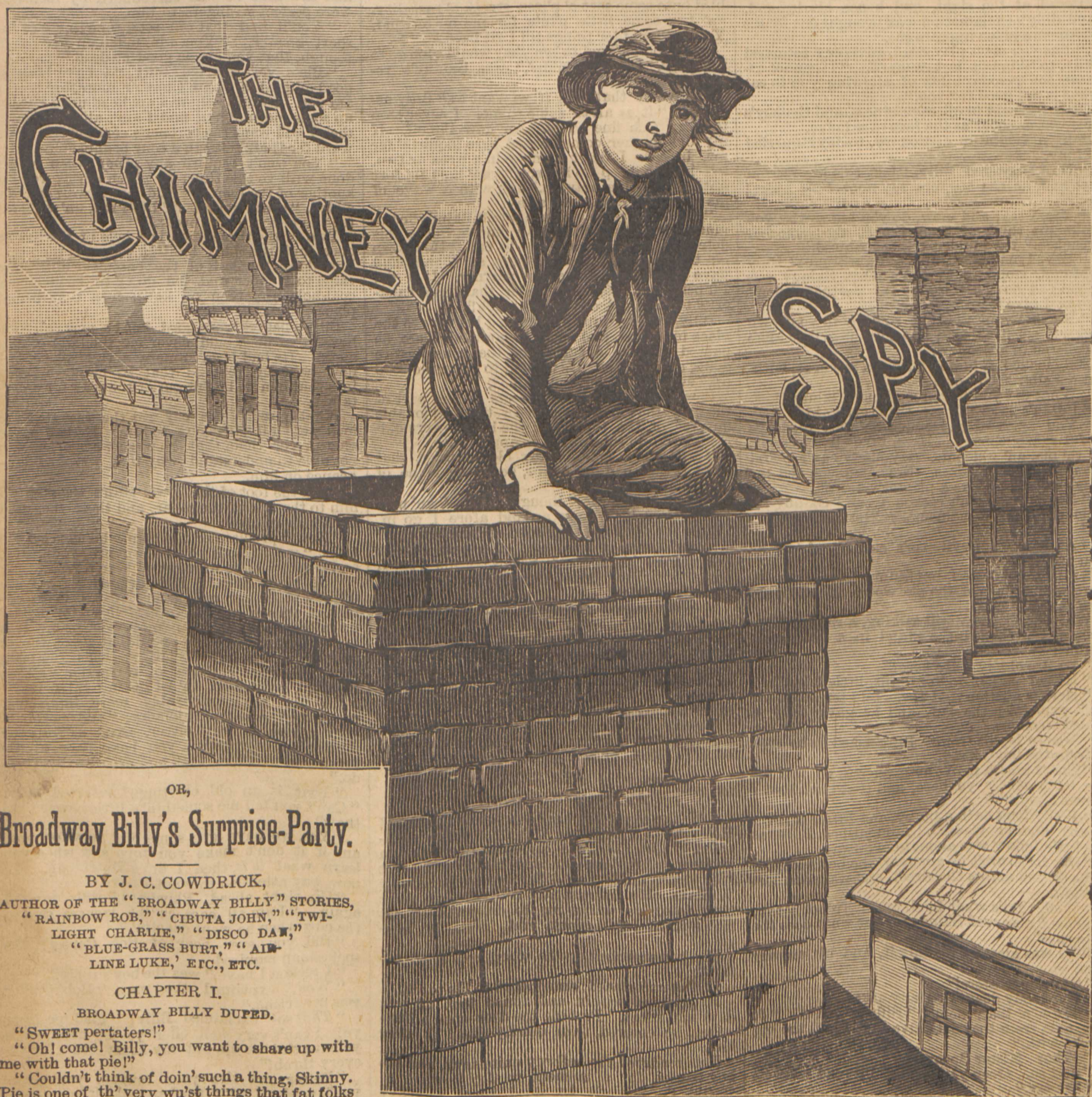
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OR,
Broadway Billy's Surprise-Party.

BY J. C. COWDRICK,
AUTHOR OF THE "BROADWAY BILLY" STORIES,
"RAINBOW ROB," "CIBUTA JOHN," "TWI-
LIGHT CHARLIE," "DISCO DAN,"
"BLUE-GRASS BURT," "AIR-
LINE LUKE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

BROADWAY BILLY DUPED.

"SWEET pertaters!"
"Oh! come! Billy, you want to share up with
me with that pie!"
"Couldn't think of doin' such a thing, Skinny.
Pie is one of th' very wu'st things that fat folks
kin eat. It wouldn't agree with ye. You're
supposed to be dead in this act, anyhow."

AFTER STOPPING SEVERAL TIMES MORE TO REST, THE BOOTBLACK BRAVO REACHED
THE CHIMNEY-TOP AND THRUST HIS HEAD OUT INTO THE FRESH AIR ABOVE.

"I ain't half as dead as I'm s'posed ter be, when there's pie around."

Broadway Billy and his partner, Skinny.

These two boys kept a corner stand on Broadway. Billy was the senior partner and Skinny the junior. They were lively lads, and each was well adapted to the part he played. The senior partner was a little given to unsteadiness in his business habits, for he had the idea in his head that he was born to be a detective. The junior partner, however, was all business, in his slow and plodding manner, and in that respect was the backbone of the company. They had both been boot-blacks, but, being ambitious to win a fortune, had set themselves up in the business named. Billy was the brains of the company, as Skinny was the backbone of their success; and the senior knew how to use his brain, too, though in his own estimation he was a know-nothing; and as a boy detective he had met with numerous adventures and considerable success. Skinny was a remarkably thin boy, but Billy always held that he was remarkably fat.

Skinny had just been home to get his dinner, Billy remaining in charge while he was gone, and on his return he found Billy munching a delicious pie. Naturally, in spite of the fact that he had just had his dinner, Skinny's mouth watered at the sight, and hence his demand. And Billy's exclamation was brought out by his partner's sudden appearance.

"But you must play dead, anyhow," returned Billy, to Skinny's last remark. "I cannot assume the responsibility of allowing you to eat what is not good for you."

This was said in all earnestness, and the boy's face was as sober as the face of a judge.

"Been feedin' on dictionary, to-day?" queried Skinny.

"No," answered Billy, "but this is a Boston pie; and, as the lawyers say *nota bene* there! See?"

"Yes, I see; and now, do you know why you make me think of Sam Small, the screecher preacher?" the junior partner inquired.

"Way I make you think of Sam Small?" Billy repeated, stopping to learn what Skinny was getting at now. "No, my fat partner, I don't know; I give it up."

"Because your pi-ety is so fillin' to your own locker!" cried Skinny; and then he grinned like a skeleton in a window.

Billy looked at him in silence a moment, without a smile; then asked:

"What did you have for dinner, Skinny?"

"I didn't have any pie, that is certain."

"You must 'a' had somethin' that made ye awful sharp, though. Here, take all that's left of th' pie, an' welcome. My pi-ety can't stand such Small innuendoes. Now, can you tell me why you are *not* like a printer's devil?"

"No, Billy, I don't reckon I can," Skinny responded, after a moment's reflection; "why is it?"

"A printer's devil isn't as fond of 'pi' as you are."

So they chatted on, but Skinny lost no time in putting his share of the pie where it would do him the most good.

While they were still talking, a ragged little urchin approached the stand in a half-timid manner and asked:

"Be Broadway Billy here?"

"He be! What do you want, little feller?"

"Here is a letter that I was told ter fetch ter ye," explained the lad, and he gave Billy a sealed envelope.

"Where is this from?" Billy asked as he took it from the boy's hand.

"There was a man giv it ter me, an' told me ter fetch it ter ye here, and that is all that I knows about it."

"Well, don't be in a hurry, and I'll see if there is any answer wanted," admonished Billy, as the little fellow was about going away.

"Oh, there ain't no answer," the boy shouted, as he darted across the street, and was soon lost to sight.

"Well, that's what I call takin' French leave, anyhow," observed Skinny; "but what does the note say?"

Billy was already reading it, and his answer was:

"Sweet pertaters!"

"Somebody dead?" Skinny asked.

"Wuss 'n' that, meebby," Billy returned. "It is a note from that detective that I pull the big stroke with."

"Who? Mister Speare?"

"Jest so. Open yer ears an' I'll read what he has ter say."

The junior partner announced that he was all attention, and Billy read:

"BROADWAY BILLY:—

"Come at once to No. 53 — street. I have some work for you to do. There is big game in the woods this time, and we will scoop some of it in. I am here in disguise, but you will know me when you see me. You must come in without ringing, as the door will not be fastened, and I will be on the watch for you. If any one stops you after you are in the house, just say, 'Here on business,' and it will be all right. Do not be alarmed at anything you may see. It is a big case, so do not fail me, but come at once. SPEARE."

"Now, I s'pose th' detective fever will be a-croppin' out on ye ag'in!" commented the junior partner in disgust. "I do wish you would give up sich fool-work an' settle down ter regular business. I should think that last fix ye got inter would 'a' cured ye."

"Cured me?" retorted Billy; "not much! I'm goin' inter this thing fer all I'm worth, an' don't you forget it. You jest tend ter this biz while I am away, my fat partner, an' when I return I'll tell ye all about it, an' throw in a pie!"

"If ye ever do return! Some of these fine days you will git inter a fix that ye won't git out of, an' that will be th' last of ye, Billy."

"Shouldn't wonder a bit if I did, Skinny, but all th' same I'm goin' ter take th' chances jest this once fer luck. I reckon Speare has tumbled onto some sort o' p'izen streak o' rascality, an' has some little p'inters fer me ter onwind. You jest 'tend ter things till I git back."

"If I didn't 'tend ter 'em, they would soon go to th' dogs, I am thinkin'," was Skinny's rejoinder.

"Have it that way if ye want to," Billy assented, "it is all th' same to me. I never stop to argy sich fine p'inters. An' now I'm off. If my old mother comes round here inquiren' fer me, in case I don't turn up in a week or two, tell her to keep up her spirits an' hold th' fort until th' prodigal returns," and with a wave of his hand, Billy hastened away.

"Well, there he goes again," Skinny commented, "and goodness only knows where this detective business is going to end. He'll keep on till he gets killed, I s'pose, an' then I shall have ter look out fer a new partner. If I do, I'll bet I won't take any feller that has a hankerin' ter be a detective—not much!"

Billy lost no time in making his way to the place indicated, and when he arrived there he paused to take a survey of the house before going any further. He wanted to "size the coop up," as he might have explained.

It was one of those old streets in that part of the city that had once been the fashionable quarter of the town, and the houses were old-fashioned and substantial in appearance.

No. 53 was a solid-looking old mansion that at some time had, no doubt, been the home of wealth and luxury.

"Well, here I am," thought Billy, "an' now I will take a little look around afore I go in. This is one of th' old-time solid rocks parts of th' city, an' I wonder what sort of a case Speare has got on hand now? Seems ter me I smell Israelite around here, some place or other. Wonder if I do?"

The boy knew well enough that it was one of the Hebrew quarters of the city.

"Yes, sure enough," he assured himself; "an' there is th' sign ter prove it. Wonder if Speare is doin' work for Mister Levi, or if he is after him? It don't much matter, I reckon, so long as there is somethin' in th' wind, an' I am comin' in fer a share of th' fun an' th' glory."

The sign to which Billy referred was a modest little plate of brass on one side of the door, and on it, in letters of black, were these words:

"MOSES LEVI,

MONEY-LENDER."

"Meebby somebody has been breakin' into old Rothschild's strong-box," Billy further meditated. "Or else some Christian dog has run away with his daughter and his ducats. But that don't make any difference to Broadway William. My business here is ter find out what that detective wants me to do, an' then git right down ter business and do it. So, here goes!"

The boy marched up the stoop and tried the door.

It was unfastened, and opened to his touch.

He glanced within and found that all was dark and silent. Pushing the door open a little wider, he entered, then quietly closed it after him.

This rendered the hallway quite dark, and the boy paused for a moment to decide what he should do. While he stood there a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder, closing with a strong grip.

Naturally startled, but recalling the instructions given in the note, he said:

"Here on business."

"Oh! you're th' lad, be ye?" exclaimed the other as he relaxed his grip. "Come right along with me, then, an' I'll show ye where ye're wanted," and Billy was pushed along, gently, to the end of the hall. There a door was opened and they went down to the basement, and there all was darkness. In a moment, though, a bright light flashed in the boy's face and then he found himself gazing at the threatening tube of a gleaming revolver, while a voice hissed into his ear:

"Broadway Billy, your little jig is up!"

CHAPTER II.

A HORRIBLE SITUATION.

"SWEET pertaters!" was Billy's exclamation of surprise and disgust the instant he saw the trap he had fallen into.

"You'll say wu'ss things 'n that, youngster, afore we git done with ye," declared the man who held the revolver at his head. "We are goin' ter square 'counts with ye this time, an' don't ye forgit it!"

"What have I been doin' to ye?" the Boot-black Bravo demanded, as he looked around and saw that he was surrounded by men who were perfect strangers to him.

"You'll find that out soon enough," was the short answer. "You kin make up yer mind, though, that you are as good as dead."

"Bless ye," retorted Billy, "I have been as good as dead a dozen times or more, an' here I am yet. I won't believe I am dead until I wake up some mornin' and find I ain't alive, an' even then I will want the coroner's certificate. Your word fer it ain't worth a sour peanut!"

"You won't require any proof when we git done with ye this time, ye p'izen imp!" growled another of the men. "And now, pardners," he added, "grab holt of th' little rat, an' we'll attend to him in short order."

Two of the three men laid hold of the boy at once, and, the third lighting the way, they carried him along the hall of the basement until they came to a door that led down to the cellar or coal-hole, and then on down into that dismal place.

Billy's nerves were good, but he now fully believed that he would never see the light of day again. He had been in many a tight place, but now he fully realized that he had been lured into that den to be put out of the way for a certainty.

What puzzled the boy was the fact that the men were all strangers to him. He had never seen one of them that he was aware of, so was not able to understand why they wreaked vengeance on him.

From the foot of the lower stairs the men led him to the side of the cellar, and there they tied his hands and feet.

"Now," proclaimed the man who carried the light, "we will tell ye who we are, youngster, and what we have brought ye here for."

"Go right ahead," Billy invited, "for I am interested in yer proceedin's to a certain extent. I am one of th' greatest fellows for pickin' up information that you 'most ever seen. It is my delight to be posted on all that is goin' on as near as can be, an' 'specially so when I happen ter be th' center figger of attraction. Chirp right up, gentlemen, an' let me into th' secret."

"You'll be considerably more interested, presently," was the rejoinder; "and not in a very agreeable way, either. And as for your pickin' up information, you have done all the pickin' in that line that you are ever likely to do."

"That is an old chestnut!" retorted Billy. "Can't you tell me somethin' a little newer than that?"

"Yes, we have got somethin' new for you, and if it don't make you turn sick when you learn what it is, then I am a Dutchman. So, now, pay attention to what I have to say."

"Go right ahead, Blowhard," Billy invited again. "I am all ears, as the jackass said to the cow when he went courtin'."

"Did you ever hear of Bob Carter?" the spokesman inquired.

"I reckon I have," was the boy's reply.

"Well," explained the man, "Bob Carter was my friend."

"That so?" exclaimed Billy; "glad ter meet ye! I can't very well offer ye my hand, since ye have tied me up, but my heart beats for ye, every throb!"

"Better not tire your tongue, youngster; you'll need all your wind to make it wag, soon. Bob Carter was my friend, and it was through you that he got sent up the river. I made up

my mind that I would fix you out so that you would never do any more sneakin' work, and any friends here are with me. Do you know what we are going to do with you?"

"Haven't the slightest idea," was the fearless return.

"Then I will have to tell you. We are going to put you into the base of the chimney of this house, alive, and then put the bricks all back into their places and fasten them there with mortar. It will be a snug little nest for you, and you will have plenty of time to think over the evil you have done in your brief career before you go up the flume."

"That is rather a 'base' joke to play on a fellow," Billy commented, "and it doesn't exactly 'soot' me. Can't we come to terms? When I get to be Governor of th' State I'll see what I can do for your friend Cob Barter—I mean Bob Carter."

"You have done all you could for him, and now you have got to pay for it."

"Well, if you really mean business, let the play begin. I never like to put off till to-morrow what can be just as well done next day. It is one of my rules of business to be as prompt as circumstances will allow."

"You have got nerve, and no mistake," one of the men complimented. "It is too bad that you didn't begin life in the right direction."

"Yes," agreed Billy. "I have grieved over that more than you would imagine. I have lost many a night's sleep over it. I suppose, though, that great men, like poets, are born, not made; and for that reason I will never amount to anything."

Billy had his wits about him, and one thing he had noticed in the conversation of those men—or two of them at least; they had two ways of speaking! At first they had addressed him in the language of crooks, and had spoken their words correctly, at other times. From this, the boy reasoned that they were no common scoundrels.

The boy noticed with a feeling of horror that the bricks had been removed from the base of the chimney, and near at hand was a board with fresh mortar upon it. It was evident, therefore, that the men meant to carry out there fiendish plot.

"You are a very fly boy," remarked the man who held the light, "but neither your nerve nor your cheek will save you this time. As I said your jig is up. Carter gave us all the points to lay this trap and here you are. Is he well secured, men?" to his two accomplices.

"Yes," they answered, "he is tied up for keeps. He couldn't get out of this fix if he tried, even if we didn't wall him in."

"We won't take any chances on that. Just put a gag in his mouth, and then we will put him away as safely as any King of Egypt was ever laid up."

"Don't it strike ye that this is a little rough on a boy?" demanded Billy.

"No rougher than you made it for Carter, you little snake," was the retort.

"What I mean," Billy then explained, "is this puttin' me inter that hole alive. If you would kindly cut my throat first, or blow my head off, it wouldn't be so bad."

This was said with all earnestness of manner, but of course the boy had no idea that his suggestion would be carried out. It was all bravado with him, and he had a hope that when they found that they could not scare him they would give him a chance to escape, if he worked the points right. Then, too, there was something in the decoy letter that kept coming up in his mind. This was the instructions he had received: *not to be alarmed at anything he might see.* Perhaps it would come out all right, after all!

In this, however, he was hoping against hope. He was in the hands of the enemy, and Detective Speare had had nothing to do with the sending of the letter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" the man who held the light laughed, "we have thought of all that, and figured it all out, my little gutter-snipe, and that is just the reason why we are going to put you in there alive. You will have time then to reflect upon the evil of your ways and wish you hadn't do so. And then, at some future day, when this old house is torn down, your poor little white skeleton will be found and people will wonder whose it can be."

"Then surely you won't deny me one last favor, will you?" Billy asked.

"And what is that?"

"It is this: Just please put a label on me to read—'Broadway Billy, awfully silly; this was the fate he deserved.'"

This was said in such a droll way that it

caused the men to laugh, and the boy had hopes that he could win them over to spare him. But he soon realized that they were only too strongly determined in their purpose, for as they ceased to laugh their leader said:

"Well, let us fool no more time away, but in to the hole with him and have it over with as soon as we can."

Billy was laid hold of then, a gag was put into his mouth, and, in a moment more, he was forced into the opening that had been made in the base of the chimney. And then the men began to replace the bricks.

One of the men was evidently a mason, for he knew well enough how to handle the trowel and mortar, and as fast as the bricks were handed to him he put them into place. In a short time the hole was all closed, except a small place at the top, and before that was bricked up the man with the lantern remarked:

"Good-by, Broadway Billy! May your bones rest easy, and may you not be missed when the trump blows!"

Had the boy had the use of his tongue he would undoubtedly have replied, but since he had not, he could only take it in silence.

In about two minutes more the hole was all closed up, and brave Broadway Billy was dead to the world. As it looked, then, the chances were wonderfully against his ever seeing the light of another day.

"There!" exclaimed the one who had done the plastering, as he laid on the last stroke, "that settles th' bizness, an' that boy won't tell no more tales. He is bound ter stay right here as long as th' house stands."

"Right you are, Dennis," agreed the one who had passed the bricks to him: "I should like to see him get out of there."

"It is out of the question," declared the one who held the light. "No one in the world could get out of such a fix, and as no one outside of us three knows he is here, he is perfectly safe. But, come, we must get out of here before old Mose and the girl return."

Billy heard them bustling around for a few minutes, as though gathering up their tools, and then heard them ascend the stairs and close the door after them at the top. Then he fully realized what a horrible situation he was in.

CHAPTER III.

BILLY STRIKES FOR FREEDOM.

THE three rascals whom we have seen take such direct and determined steps to remove Broadway Billy from the world of the living, and who had succeeded, it would seem, in the undertaking, were three as wily rogues as could be found in the city.

Their explanation to the boy was, in the main, true. They were friends to some of the men whom Billy had brought to justice on one or two occasions, and it was their purpose to put the lad out of the way to avenge their caged comrades.

Hiram Plover, the one who carried the light and held the revolver, was one of the greatest sharpers in New York. Many a bold and desperate game of evil work had he carried forward to a successful issue, and had thus far succeeded in keeping out of the hands of the police.

Dick Crabber, the one who had met Billy in the hall and taken him down to the basement, was another of about the same stamp, though he was not such a chief of rascals as Plover.

The third man was one Dennis Meggins, a mason by trade but a thorough rogue who was a ready and willing tool to Plover and Crabber in any sort of work they might require.

The house they were in was owned and occupied by Moses Levi, a money-lender, and his daughter. Plover and Crabber were very handy to Mose once in a while, and enjoyed his friendship and patronage. From this it will be seen that the Jew was none too honest in his dealings with his fellow-men, but he was always careful to keep out of the clutches of the law. The Jew's daughter, Rebeckah by name, was a decidedly pretty girl, about nineteen years of age, and had many admirers. She was unlike her father in many respects, and chiefly in the respect that she was more conscientious and honest than he.

Father and daughter were not at present at home. Plover, however, had the entrance to the house at all times, as he was in the Jew's employ, and he was having some repairs made during his employer's absence. This would account for the presence of the mason there, but it was in truth all a carefully arranged scheme for the purpose of removing from their path forever the hero of our stories—Broadway Billy.

When the three rascals had gone up out of the cellar to the basement floor, Plover paid the

mason for his work, and after he had treated him and Crabber to some of the Jew's choicest liquor, bade them adieu and they went away.

About an hour later the old Jew and his daughter arrived, and Plover met them in the hall.

"Vell, Plover," the old man exclaimed, "here ve vas, all right side oop mit care. How vas dings here?"

"Oh, every thing is all right," Plover answered, as he grasped the Jew's hand, "and I am glad to see you safe home again. And you, Miss Rebeckah," he added with a bow, "I hope you are well and that you have had a charming time while away."

"Thank you," the girl responded, "I am quite well and have enjoyed myself very much indeed."

"Where is t'e housekeeper?" Moses inquired.

"I let her go away for a day or two while the carpenter and mason were at work in the house," explained Plover. "She will no doubt be here soon."

"And how did you get along mit dose repairs?"

"Very well indeed. We just finished up a little while ago."

Let us mention here that the old Jew knew nothing about the plot against the boy, and that he was entirely unaware that any crime had been committed during his absence.

"And what vas t'e gost?" was the next—the all-important—inquiry.

"Only about twenty dollars," Plover answered, but even that sum was large enough to make the old Jew wince.

While the two were talking, the daughter went on upstairs to her room; and after some further conversation, the old Jew gave Plover some instructions and followed her example.

A short time later the housekeeper and the other servant were at their posts of duty, and the household machine moved on as though there had been no break in its regularity.

In the mean time, however, what of Broadway Billy?

When he heard the three men ascend the stairs and close the door after them at the top, then he fully realized the horror of his situation. He was buried alive in the bottom of that massive chimney, and there was little prospect of his ever getting out alive.

As has been mentioned, he was planning some means of escape even while he was being fastened in there, and had thought that he saw a possible chance. But it was only a hope, and now when he came to put it into practice he found that it was beyond his strength to accomplish.

"Sweet pertaters," was his mental ejaculation, "but they put it up stronger than I thought they could. I thought that I could push it down when they had made themselves scarce so's ter give me a chance. Now I am in a tight box fer sure. Reckon I am put here to stay, and no mistake. Stars alive, though, haven't I been in jest as bad fixes a dozen times? An' haven't I come out all safe and sound every time? I reckon I have, an' won't say die this time, either."

Several times the boy tried his strength against the newly put-up portion of the wall, but it was useless to try to push it down. He had but little room to move in, and not having the use of his hands he could push only with his knees.

"Nixey," he thought, "it can't be did. And here I am as safe as a rat in a trap. And now let me put on my thinkin'-cap an' see what kin be done ter ease my woes a little. There is no use in givin' up th' ghost, I reckon, while I kin find air to keep th' machine a-goin', fer I have been in so many bad fixes in my short career that I am sort o' gettin' used to 'em. I have been screwed up in a coffin and had my last good-by preached; I have been plugged up in a barrel and set adrift on th' river; I have been dropped inter th' sewer; I have been shut up in jail; an' now I am here. I guess I have as many lives as a cat, an' if that is so I ruther think that I'll come out of this fix all right, fer I haven't parted with ary one of my lives yet that I am aware of. Now, how am I ter git my hands free? I have had 'em tied up so often that I'd orter know all th' tricks of th' game by this time, but this time th' circumstances is a little different from all th' others. Let me do some more thinkin'."

Billy was not very easily disheartened, but there was no cheering hope in view to keep his spirits up now. It was a dismal outlook, for if he could not push down the bricks, even if he should succeed in getting his hands free, he would be no better off than before. With his hands free, however, he could remove the gag

from his mouth and then perhaps he could make some one hear his cries for help.

He set his active mind at work, trying hard to think of some plan by which he might gain his liberty, but for some time no idea would come to him.

"Reckon my thinkin'-machine must be gettin' rusty," he mused. "I used ter be able ter plot an' plan wuss'n a man runnin' fer office, but it seems that I'm no good no more. If I only had some brains like other folks there would be some use in my tryin' ter think, but as it is, with a head all full o' mush an' milk, I dunno what will 'come o' me anyhow. Let me think some more."

All the adventures he had ever had came into the boy's mind, and he thought of all the ways and means he had found before to escape from threatening danger, and to get out of a tight place.

Presently a new thought came to him. If he could find a sharp corner of a brick anywhere within reach, he might possibly be able to rub against it the cords that held his hands until he could break them.

He began at once to feel around, and presently found just such a projection as he had hoped for. One of the bricks protruded inward a little further than its companions, and the end of it was split in such a shape that it left one edge rather sharp.

"Sweet pertaters, but we're bound ter be happy yet!" Billy exclaimed in thought when he made the discovery. "Now let's git right down ter business, Billy," he added, "an' we'll soon see what we kin do."

Placing his back in the right position to bring his wrists into contact with the brick, he began to work away with a will.

But it proved slow work. The edge of the brick was not very hard, and it wore away almost as fast as did the string. Still the boy kept up his courage, and he did not stop for a moment, knowing full well that everything now depended on his getting his hands and his jaws free.

The string with which he was tied was of the most stubborn kind, and it would not yield very easily, and when at the end of half an hour's work the boy tried its strength, he found that he was still unable to break it.

Again he set to work, and at the end of another half-hour tried it once more.

This time it gave way a little, so that he was encouraged to keep on with the none-too-easy work.

"This is about th' toughest string that I ever tackled," he mused, "or else the brick I'm rubbin' it on is as soft as putty. I have had more fun than this many a time. Next time I get a note o' invitation, you kin bet that I shall look inter th' thing a little afore I jump up an' go off half-cocked like I did this time. They took me in slick on this racket, an' no mistake."

When he thought he had worked long enough to wear out either the string or the brick, he stopped again and tested it, and this time the string gave way, and his hands were free.

This done, it was but a moment's work to take the gag out of his mouth.

"Rah fer our side!" he exclaimed. "This is th' first great step fer liberty. When Broadway Billy kin use his tongue there is some hopes of his gittin' out of th' wu'st diffikilty that he kin be put inter. Now, what is ter be ther next move on ther programme?"

His feet claimed his attention next, and here another difficulty was presented. The space where he was standing was so narrow that he had not room to stoop over, and it was some moments before he could think of a plan of action to attain the end desired. He had a knife, but if he could not get at his feet to use it, it was of little use.

Before proceeding further, after the first attempt, he tried once more to push down the bricks that had so lately been put in place. He had hopes that when his hands were free he would have no trouble in doing this, but he now found that he was entirely unable to accomplish it. The mortar, however, was soft, and with his knife he dug some of it out, but the blade was too short to be of much use, and he gave it up for the time, and turned his attention again to his feet.

He made several vain attempts to reach the cords with the knife, but at last, by spreading his knees apart and sitting straight down, with his arm behind him, succeeded, and the keen blade soon severed them.

"There," he muttered, "now I am free as far as arms, an' legs an' tongue is concerned, an' now th' next thing is somethin' else. How be I ter git out of this rat-hole? Reckon I'll have

ter dig out some o' these bricks, till I git a good brace on' th' rest of 'em, an' then mebbly I kin push 'em all out. Then— But, hold on, here's a new idee. What's ter hinder me from climbin' up? Funny I couldn't think o' that afore this. Here goes, jest fer luck."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEGINNING OF COMPLICATIONS.

ROBERT WALTON and Henry Richards were cousins.

These young men were about of the same age, and both were good-looking. The parents of each had died when they were quite young, and they had been brought up by their grandfather, Thomas Walton.

Robert had always been the old gentleman's favorite, as he was always upright and honest in all his dealings, and was careful with his money, always living within the allowance the old gentleman gave him. Henry, on the other hand, was a little wild, was never out of debt, and his ways and doings were not always commendable.

For these reasons, and others, perhaps, Robert was looked upon as the one who would fall heir to the bulk of his grandfather's wealth.

About two hours after the return home of Moses Levi and his daughter, there came a gentleman to see the old money-lender. He sent in his card, and when the old Jew received it he rubbed his hands gleefully.

"Show heem in," he ordered, "show heem rightd in."

The card bore the name:

"ROBERT WALTON."

Moses bustled around and placed a chair for his caller, and then stood with clasped hands, ready to make a most profound bow when he appeared.

When the young man entered, however, his face wore such a melancholy look that it stopped the Jew in the midst of his bow, and caused him to exclaim in all haste:

"Vhy! my tear Ropert! vhat vas t'e matter? Your face looks like you vas peen mit a funeral sometime 'lreaty."

"Have you not heard that my grandfather is dead?" the young man asked.

"Your grandfather deadt!"

"Yes, dead and buried."

"Thomas Valton deadt and puried! I can hartly pelieve it. Vhen did he tie?"

"Four days ago. He was taken off rather suddenly."

"Vell, vell, vell. Thomas Valton deadt. Thomas Valton deadt and puried. Dot peats my time, ybust like anyting. But, sooch ish life, and ve don't know how gwick ve vill pe here to-morrow, and pe gone away next day alreaty. Dot ish too pad; but you vill soon cheer oop, my tear Ropert, vhen you get holdt of t'e oldt shentleman's money."

"Unfortunately, both for you and for me, Mr. Levi, I shall never handle any of his wealth."

"Vhat!" cried the old Jew with a scream, jumping at least a foot high, "vhat did you said?"

"What I mean is this: My grandfather has willed all of his money and property to my cousin, Henry Richards."

"Impossible!"

"Not a bit of it. The will has been read, and there it is in black and white."

"Pones of Abraham! but you shall pay for this! Vhere is my ten t'ousandt tollars vhat you owes me? You must pay me, and pay me gwick, too. I vill not vait von day! I vill have my monish now—now dhis fery hour! Do you hear me? You shall not leave dhis house undil you pays me."

Trembling with rage and excitement, the old Jew glared at the young man like a demon, shaking his fists at him and stamping his feet.

Here, evidently, was a chapter in the young man's history that was not generally known. Was there something in his life that his grandfather had found out? something to his discredit, the cause of his being disinherited? There was certainly a secret somewhere, else how could he owe the old money-lender such a sum of money?

Robert Walton leaned back in his chair and laughed.

"Excuse me for laughing," he presently apologized, "but I could not help it. You are cutting the most ridiculous figure I ever saw in my life. I am sorry to the bottom of my heart, Jew, that I have not ten thousand dollars to lay in your hand this very moment, but as I have it not, you will have to wait until I can get it. I shall endeavor to keep the interest paid up, and

the principal shall be yours as soon as I can raise it. At present I am almost a beggar, but I have my hands and brain, thank the Lord! and I shall soon find something to do."

"Bah!" screamed the Jew, "dot ish baby talk! I want my monish, and I wants him now!"

"Well, you cannot have it now, that is certain," returned the young man, in a calm tone. "You have heard what I will do, and that is all I can do. And I advise you to take it easy."

"Dake id easy! How can a man dake id easy vhen he lose him ten t'ousandt tollars?"

"But, it is not lost, my old friend. Have you not yet learned the value of my word? If I live, you shall have every penny of it, if it takes me a lifetime to pay it."

"You had no peesness to go security for so large a sum, vhen you vas vorth nothing," the old Jew complained.

"Now stop right there," the young man commanded. "You know very well that it was at your invitation that I did so. I told you at the time that I was worth nothing, but you were willing to take my name upon my expectations. Is this not true?"

"But how vas I to know dot you would get left on dot?" growled the Jew.

"You could not know it, of course, nor could I foresee it. I am greatly disappointed, and cannot understand how it is, but it is as it is. Had I had any doubts about it, and foreknowledge of how it would turn out, money could not have induced me to put my name to that paper. You remember very well how it was, or ought to. Henry Kingsland, a college friend of mine, had fifteen thousand dollars, and wanted ten thousand more in order to make a certain investment which he believed would bring him a big return. I introduced him to you, and you offered to lend him the amount provided I would give my name in security. I told you that I was worth nothing, but you cared nothing for that. You were willing to take the risk, and so I gave my name. A few months later Kingsland's scheme failed, he lost all he had, and then he committed suicide and left me to settle his score with you. I have managed to keep the interest paid up, and have been trusting to my expectations to be able to pay the principal. Now, however, the bottom has dropped out of that boat, and here I am."

"But, vill not Henry Richards help you out?" the Jew inquired.

"No," answered the young man, "he hates me."

"Vell, t'en, you must fightd heem. You must go to gourt mit heem and make 'im share oop mit you."

"I shall do nothing of the sort. My business here was to tell you just how the matter stands, and to inform you that I shall try to keep up the interest and eventually pay the whole debt."

"Tribulations in Babylon!" cried the Jew, "you hafe robbed me! You hafe make my declining years miserable for me. You hafe mine gray hairs pring in sorrow mit t'e grave. Oh! oh! my monish, my monish!"

"Listen, Jew," the young man interrupted, breaking in upon his melancholy wail, "in two months your interest will be due, and if I live I will come and pay you promptly. Until then, adieu."

With these words Robert Walton left the room and the house.

The young man had not gone far when he felt a light touch upon his arm, and looking around quickly he found pretty Rebeckah Levi at his side.

"Pardon me," she begged, "but I have something to say to you."

"Surely there is nothing to pardon," returned Robert.

"Are you in trouble?" the girl asked, coming immediately to business, and as she put the question she looked up into his face with something more than a passing interest.

The young gentleman smiled.

"Well," he responded, "I must admit that I am not the happiest man on earth. Still, I suppose I should not complain, for undoubtedly there are others who are far more unhappy than I."

"But you are in trouble, are you not?" the girl persisted. "Do you owe my father money which you cannot repay?"

"That is about the way it stands," Robert admitted.

"And what is the sum you owe him?" was the next inquiry.

"Ten thousand dollars."

"So much!"

"Not a cent less, though I wish it were."

"And does my father threaten you?"

"No, not seriously, I guess. He was somewhat excited when I told him of my misfortune, but I guess he will take it easy and give me time to square the account. I ask nothing more."

"Your misfortune?" the girl interrogated; "what misfortune have you had?"

The young man told his story over again, he and Rebeckah being quite well acquainted and he knowing that she was not asking out of idle curiosity.

"I am deeply sorry for you," the girl owned, "and if I can help you I will. I think I can promise you that my father shall not press you for the payment."

Robert smiled.

"It will avail him nothing if he does," he averred. "I have nothing to pay with, and it will not be easy for him to get anything out of me. Still, as I told him, and as I have told you, the debt shall be paid in time."

"Well, be of good cheer, and perhaps some good friend will come to your rescue. And now I will say good-by."

With these words the girl gave a playful nod of her pretty head and ran away toward home, leaving the young man gazing after her with a great deal of admiration in his earnest eyes.

"She is certainly pretty," he mused, "and I am afraid that she has more than a passing fancy for me, poor girl."

The pretty Jewess went straight home, and was met in the hall by the housekeeper, who said:

"Where in sakes have you been, Miss Becky? Your father wants you."

"Oh, I have only been out a little way," was the explanatory reply. "Where is my father?"

Learning that he was in the library, the young lady went there at once, and there found her father pacing up and down the room like a caged tiger.

"You want to see me, father?" Rebeckah queried.

"Yes, I want to see you," was the none-too-pleasant answer. "I want to told you dot I vas a ruined man! Dot peggar, dot Robert Walton, hafe robbed me!"

"You are greatly mistaken, father," was the girl's calm reply, "I am sure he will pay you whatever he owes you. You seem to have turned against him rather suddenly, have you not? Only a short time ago he was a prince in your eyes, and you gave me to understand that it would please you if I could win him for a husband."

"Visdom of Solomon!" the old man screamed, "let me not hear you mention such a t'ing again! I would not hafe you marry t'e dog. He is not worthy of you. You shall marry his cousin, Henry Richards, or you shall never marry at all. Do you heard me? I say you shall marry Henry Richards."

"You will learn, father," was the calm and dignified reply, "that my affection is not to be made a plaything. You have led me to regard Robert Walton as my future husband, and I have learned to love him. I will marry him or I shall never marry at all."

CHAPTER V.

BILLY HEARS SOMETHING.

"SWEET pertaters!"

Little need to say that this was uttered by Broadway Billy.

We left him just on the point of climbing up the chimney; we find him after making the start, stuck in the flue.

"Well, if I ain't in a purty fiz now," he grumbled, "then I'll eat my hat. It was bad enough down there on th' ground, when I had my hands tied an' no prospects o' getting 'em untied again, but I reckon this is some worse. Here I am, stuck in th' flue of this chimbley, an' can't git up ner down. I wish them fellers that put me here was right here with me, an' then there would be some sort of saterfaction in it. It is said that misery likes company, an' I guess it is about so. Too bad it isn't Skinny instead o' me, fer he could git through this hole without any trouble at all. But somethin' has got ter be done, that is dead sure, and I reckon I had better be doin' it. It wouldn't be very pleasant fer me if they happened ter make a rousin' hot fire down below me somewheres, that is sartain. Guess this is th' wrong time o' year fer hot fires, though unless I happen ter be in th' flue o' th' kitchen chimbley. In that case they'd be likely ter make roast meat o' me right soon."

While he talked thus to himself he was resting and getting ready for another attempt to climb upward.

"I'll give it one more good strong tussle," he muttered, "an' then if I don't git clear I'll have ter make up my mind ter stay right here an'

fast until I git thinner. I'm fast enough as it is, but if I fast a little longer I may get loose. One thing is certain, I won't be so fast about fallin' inter sich traps another time."

Taking a good long rest, the boy finally prepared to make another effort to free himself.

He was in about the worst place in the whole chimney. It was a place where there was a bend, and just there the chimney was smaller than anywhere else. Billy could see that it was wider and larger further up, and felt sure that once he could get beyond this point his escape to the top of the house would be easy.

"Now," he muttered, "here goes, an' it's git thar Eli if ye kin."

Taking as good a hold as he could secure, he pulled and tugged and squirmed with all his strength, but at first he did not move an inch.

"Guess I'll have ter give it up an' make up my mind ter stay right here," he then panted. "It is about th' tightest fix I have been in fer some time. Great ginger! but won't I be a sight when I do get out—if I do. My poor old mammy won't own me. Why, if I should meet Inspector Br— Hello! here is a good hold fer my right hand, an' now mebbly I can make somethin' give way. I'll either turn this old chimbley inside out or pull myself out of it. Here goes."

The boy had been feeling around to get a new hold, and now had found it. There was one place where there was a little space between the bricks just large enough for his hand, and that was just what he wanted.

Thrusting his hand into the hole and taking a good grip he made another effort to free himself.

He moved a little this time, and was encouraged to try again.

Waiting to rest, he once more exerted all his strength, and this time gained quite a little. Two more trials, then, and he was free in the larger part of the flue.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed, "I would like to know if I pulled myself out of my skin. It feels as though I had. Wonder if I will grow another, same as th' big snakes. Well, here I be, an' now ter climb up to th' top."

Waiting a few minutes to regain his wind, the boy took a fresh start and began to ascend. And now he made pretty good progress.

But it was slow work at the best, and it was so tiring that he had to stop quite frequently to recover his spent strength.

After some time he came to a place where a ray of light attracted his attention, and turning his head to learn where it came from, he found that he was just at a point where there was a chimney-hole in the wall, and he could look down into a room.

Even before this he had heard voices, but had been unable to catch what was being said, and now he saw two persons in the room. And so plainly could he see them that he drew back for an instant in the fear that he would be seen by them.

When he reflected, however, that it was all darkness to them in the chimney, even should they chance to look that way, and that they would never suspect that any one would be there, he had more confidence.

He kept perfectly still, and again looked through into the room.

One of the persons present was an old Jew, and the other was a pretty young lady, perhaps his daughter, as Billy reasoned it out.

They were, in truth, old Moses Levi and his daughter, and Billy became a witness to the brief interview recorded in the last preceding chapter.

When the girl gave her decided and emphatic answer to her father's declaration that she should marry Henry Richards, the old Jew turned fairly white in his rage.

"What?" he screamed, "do you mean to tefy me? I vill shut you oop in your room and you shall hafe nothing but bread and vater to eat. I vill show you that you shall do vhat I told you, py mighty!"

"In this thing I cannot obey you, father," the girl answered. "I love Robert Walton, and if I cannot win his love I shall not try to win the love of another. It is your own doings that it is so. You insisted that I should strive to win his regard, and try to lead him to ask me to become his wife, and before I knew it I loved him."

"But, he is a peggar—a peggar!" the old man cried. "Do you t'ink dot I would hafe you to marry a peggar? All of t'e old shentleman's riches hafe been left to t'e other man, Henry Richards, and now I say you must marry heem."

"Then it is for the money that you wanted

me to win Robert, is it? And now that the money has passed into other hands, you think that my heart must follow it, eh?"

"Bully fer you," Broadway Billy mentally exclaimed. "I like you purty well, I do, an' I reckon you are made of the right stuff, even if you are Jew."

"For t'e monish," repeated the old man, "to pe sure it ish t'e monish. You don't t'ink I would hafe you marry mit a shentile for anyt'ing else, do you? Vell, I guess not. And now I tells you dot you can make oop your mind dot you must hafe not'ings more to say mit dot peggar, but you must put your mind on catching t'e man who has t'e monish."

"I thought you knew me better, father," the young woman returned. "You can never induce me to change my mind. It was to please you that I tried to win Robert, and you can thank yourself that I am in love with him as I am. Then my heart was free, and I was willing to obey you in all things. Now, however, what you ask is so unreasonable that no one can blame me for the stand I take in refusing to obey."

"That's th' stuff!" exclaimed Broadway Billy under his breath. "Hit him there again, miss, and you will down him. You are in th' right, every time, an' there is no reason in what he is sayin'. Load right up and pitch right inter him."

"Pe gone!" the old man cried, waving his hand toward the door. "Vhen I vant you I vill send for you."

The daughter bowed and withdrew, and old Moses began again to pace the floor.

"Oh, my ten t'ousandt tollars!" he moaned.

"Oh, my taughter, my taughter!"

"Oh! my ducats! Oh! my daughter! Oh, my ducats and my daughter!" un-loving Broadway Billy exclaimed to himself, and he would have given anything to have uttered the words aloud.

"Oh! harp of Tavid!" the old money-lender cried, as he pulled madly at his beard and hair; "why vas I born? Yust when I t'ink eferyt'ing vas all righdt, it vas all wrong. Yust when I t'ink it vas all righdt, and my taughter would marry a fortune, den it vas all upset. Oh! my ten t'ousandt tollars! and oh! my taughter, my taughter!"

"Go it, old Lookshy, or Shylock, whatever yer name is," muttered the boy in the chimney. "You are a good one, and no error about that. I guess I'll roost right here and enjoy th' fun as long as it lasts. I'd like ter bet ye twenty-five cents that th' girl gits th' best of ye on th' argyment. Wimmin is bad men ter deal with, every time, an' especially so when ye try ter cross 'em in their love affairs. My advice ter you, Mister Jewsharp, is ter go a little slow."

But the old man did not seem inclined to "go slow" at all. If anything, he grew more and more excited every moment.

"Yacop's cattle!" he broke out again, "but this shall nefer pe! Here I hafe been locking upon dot Walton fortune as mine own efer seence dot young man put his name to dot note for t'e ten t'ousandt tollars, and now to have it daken away from me like this— Oh! it is too mooch, too mooch! But, it shall nefer pe! Mine taughter shall now pay gourt to t'e winning heir, and t'e monish shall yet rebose in mine strong box. Ha, ha, ha! I vill show t'em all that I hold t'e strongest hand in t'e game, and I would like to see t'em get away from me. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You will be laughin' on th' ether side of yer homely old face afore ye git through with this thing, or I am no prophet," mused Broadway Billy.

After walking up and down the room several times more, and giving vent to a great many more idle and evil vagaries of speech, the old money-lender stopped suddenly and gave a sharp pull at a bell-cord that hung near his table.

In a few minutes Hiram Plover entered the room in answer to the summons.

"Did you ring?" he asked.

"Did I ring? Vell, I should said so!"

"Well, here I am, at your pleasure."

"Not mooch bleasure aboutt it yust now, dot I assure you," growled the old Jew.

"Why, what has gone wrong?" Plover asked.

"Didn't you heard vhat I peen howling apoudt for t'e last ten minutes?"

"I heard you growling about something, but I paid no attention to what you said."

The old Israelite looked relieved.

"I hafe noticed of late," he observed, "dot you seem to t'ink vell of mine taughter. Would you like to marry her?"

Plover was so astonished that he could hardly speak. It was true that he thought well—very

well—of the pretty Jewess, and it was a secret wish of his heart that he might be able to win her regard, marry her, and eventually handle her father's wealth. And now to have the old man bring the matter right up— Surely, there was a storm brewing.

"It is true that I think highly of her," Plover acknowledged, "but to marry her is beyond my wildest hopes of happiness."

"Goot! very goot!" the old money-lender cried, lowering his voice and rubbing his hands gleefully.

"What do you mean?" Plover demanded, wondering what could be coming.

"Vhat do I mean? I mean yust this: If you vill do von favor for me you shall hafe mine taughter to pe your wife."

"Do you mean that?"

"S'help me gootness, yes."

"Well, what is the favor you want? If it is anything that man can do, be sure that I will undertake it."

The old Jew rubbed his hands, leaned over toward his companion, and in a hoarse whisper confided:

"I vant you to put a man out of t'e vay."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MONEY-LENDER'S SCHEME.

"SWEET pertaters and hard-tack!"

This time Broadway Billy came very near letting his presence in the chimney be known, for he uttered his exclamation almost aloud.

Here was something he had not looked for. It looked as though there would be something for him to undertake in the way of detective work, if he wanted to do it, and there was nothing in the world that the boy liked better.

"This here is beginnin' ter look like real old business," he muttered. "Wonder what is in th' wind, an' who it is that the old Sheeny wants put out of th' way. He kin bet his life that William o' Broadway will be in at th' killin', if he kin git there, an' he reckons he kin. I have climbed so fur up the chimbley, an' I reckon I am good fer th' rest of th' way. They kin bet high that there will be some rattlin' 'mongst th' dry bones, or I don't know what my name is. This beats all that I ever heard of. Here they set out ter kill me, an' now I am onter 'em fer all I'm worth, an' it looks as if th' shoe would be on th' other foot afore they knows it. It does beat all how sich things turns out. Wonder what Inspector Br— Hello! they're sayin' somethin' more, an' I mustn't miss a word now."

The blunt proposal had for a moment staggered Plover.

"Are you in earnest?" he asked, as soon as he could find his tongue.

"Of gourse I am in earnest. Do you t'ink dot I would make a blayt'ing out of you?"

"Well, who is the man that you want put out of your way?"

"You first tell me if you pe villing to do t'e job."

"If you will hold to your promise that I shall have your daughter to be my wife, I will undertake to remove half a dozen men from your path."

"Dot ish goot! Dot ish fery goot! I thought you vould pe villing to help me on dose terms. You do dot, and you shall hafe mine taughter."

"It is understood then, and you must know that I shall hold you strictly to the bargain. I will not allow you to play with me, you want to understand that right at the start."

"To pe sure."

"Well, then, go ahead and let me know what it is that I am to do."

"Yes, I vill do dot right away. Yust see if dot toor is shut tight, and t'en ve vill pe all alone and no von can hear us."

Plover tried the door, and then he and the old Jew sat down close together and the old man began:

"Mine frent Plover, I hafe yust peen sheated out of ten t'ousandt tollars. I am almost a ruined man."

Plover smiled.

"Oh, you can shmile, but it is t'e truth. Ten t'ousandt tollars hafe peen daken from me, an' I vill nefer see mine monish no more."

"And is that the reason you want the man put out of the way?"

"Vell, dot ish von reason, put there is another von pesides. You see mine taughter she hafe make oop her mind she lofe t'e rascal vhat sheat me, and vants to marry beem. I say her no, and t'en she t'ink she do as she please. Ve vill seen apoudt dot. You put dot feller oud t'e vay and t'en you shall hafe mine taughter for yourself. Do you see? I like you pooty vell, Plover,

and I t'ink t'e girl vill make you a goot little wife."

Plover looked elated.

"Who is this fellow you speak about?" he inquired.

"It ish dot Robert Valton vhat you hafe seen come here somedimes."

Plover's jaw dropped a little.

"I cannot understand the case," he confessed. "I thought that he was one of your best friends. I had the idea that you were rather trying to encourage his attentions to Rebeckah."

The old money-lender laughed.

"Dot vas all for a plind," he declared. "You see I felt a leedle shaky apoudt mine monish, and I thought I vould let t'e girl blay a part to attract the rascal here so as I could geep mine eye on him."

"And you overreached yourself, eh?" Plover insinuated. "You wanted the man to fall in love with the girl, and instead of that she fell in love with him."

"Dot vas apoudt t'e size of id," the old man had to confess.

If Broadway Billy had heard the first of the case, namely, the interview between Robert Walton and the old money-lender, he would know that the latter was now lying to the best of his ability. In truth, he did know it, for he had heard enough of the conversation between the father and daughter to show him that the old man was trying to play a double game of some sort.

"There is several niggers in th' woodpile here, that is a dead sure thing," the boy mused. "Not ten minutes ago the old Jew sharp was tellin' th' girl that she had to marry a felier named Henry Richards, an' now he is promisin' her to this galoot. I bet my best hat that I'm goin' ter git onter his haze, an' then if I don't make him eat pork, I'm a Jew myself."

"It certainly looks that way," Plover declared. "But," he added, "is there no other way for you to square the account besides putting the man out of the world?"

"Dot ish t'e only vay," the Jew insisted.

"Could you not cure the girl's liking for him by sending her a letter purporting to be from him, in which he could be made to cast her off in the roughest kind of way? I should think that would cure her about as soon as anything."

This would no doubt have been a good plan had the old rascal been playing a fair game with Plover, but as it was it did not suit his ideas at all.

"Dot vill not do at all," he protested. "De man hafe made me his enemy for all time, and he shall pay for id. Pesides, dot letter peesness vould pe found oud, and t'en there vould pe hot vater roundt, may pe. No, he must tie."

"Very well, then, if you insist upon it I shall not kick," agreed Plover. "To confess the truth, I have loved your daughter for a long time, but I never thought I stood even the slightest chance in the field."

"You see t'en how easy id vas to pe mistaken," was the comment. "I hafe had mine eye upon you for some dime, and I am glad to know dot you lofe t'e girl."

"Well," Plover asked, "how do you want me to do for that fellow? It will be no easy undertaking, I am thinking, and if you have any plan of your own, suggest it."

At this the old money-lender shrugged and spread out his hands as only one of his peculiar people can, replying:

"Dot ish your part of t'e peesness, and I hafe nothing to do mit id. Only you must make a sure t'ing of id, dot is all I can say apoudt id."

"All right, I will go it alone, and if you see an account in the papers of a mysterious disappearance, do not let it surprise you any. Is that all you have to say to me?"

"Yes, dot is all. Do not mention vhat I hafe toldt you, not efen to de girl. Ve vill let her down a leedle easy, you know."

"Trust me for that," returned Plover.

With this Plover left the room, and as soon as he was gone the old Jew hugged himself and laughed heartily but silently.

"Somethin' seems to tickle you mightily," muttered Broadway Billy, as he looked down upon him from the chimney. "You seem ter be as happy as a clam at high water. You must be tryin' ter work up some big game, you old pinch-penny, you, an' I vould just like ter know th' hull secret of yer evil designs. But I'll git onter ye, sure pop. It is my delight ter stick my nose inter other folks' business, an' I can't help it any more'n I kin help eatin'. Both comes nat'ral with me."

For some minutes the Jew continued to hug himself and laugh, and then he once more got

up and paced the floor. He was now in a better humor than he had been before.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, in a cautious tone, "id ish vorking pully. Vhen I gets dot young mans oudt of t'e vay, and get Repeckah set upon t'e righdt path after t'e other heir, t'en I can tefy Plover and tell him to go to plazes. Id vill gost me t'e ten t'ousant tollars, to pe sure, but t'en that is apout as goot as gone anyhow, for it vill dake t'e young man his lifedime to pay it, and t'en that vouldn't be a trop in t'e pucket of t'e Valton fortune, anyhow. Oh, id ish vorking shblendid!"

"You are right it is," quoth Billy. "It is working so well, old Jewsharp, that you will put your foot into it th' first thing you know. If I don't make you sick and silly it will be because I don't know what my name is. And now, I reckon I had better be making my way out of here as soon as I can. Mebbly I had better hold on a bit, though, till you go out of th' room, fer ye might hear me, an' then there vould be th' Old Nick ter pay, sure."

As it happened, he had not long to wait, for in a few minutes Moses left the room, closing the door after him.

"Now's my chance," thought Billy, "and here goes."

He was now thoroughly rested, and started upward with renewed vigor and hopes.

It was slow work, but the boy was all grit and stick-to, and he made every effort count.

At last, after a great deal of hard work, and after stopping several times more to rest, the Bootblack Bravo reached the chimney-top, and thrust his head out into the fresh air above. And he gave a sigh of relief as he did so.

"Thank goodness, I am so far out, anyhow," he exclaimed. "It seems to me that I do git inter th' wu'st scrapes of any boy in this hull town. Now, who vould have thought this mornin' when I got up from my little bed that I vould be in sich a plight as this afore night? Never did I dream of it. But, th' life of a detective can't be all milk an' honey, an' I reckon I'll have ter take th' bitter with th' sweet. This sort o' fun don't suit me, though, not fer a cent; though ter look at me any one might think that I am very well sooted indeed. Reckon I'll have ter git out a patent on that pun."

After another short rest at the top of the chimney, the boy pulled himself on up and scrambled out onto the roof.

"Well, if I ain't a purty sight," he muttered, as he looked himself over. "I have tried to git up a disguise now an' then, but I never struck anything like this. I reckon my own mammy vouldn't know me. Hang me fer a ninny if I hardly know myself!"

He was certainly in no very presentable condition.

By this time night was coming on, and the lad lost no time in looking around to find some means of getting down to the street. He walked back to the rear of the roof, and looked down into the little yard, but there was no way of getting down on that side. On the front, as he knew, it would be useless for him to try.

Turning his attention next to the houses on either side; he looked to see what the prospect was that way.

On one side was a house a little higher than the one he was on, and on the other side was one a little lower. Next to the lower one, however, was one still higher than any of them, so he turned to the higher one next to the one he stood on.

Climbing up onto this house, the boy crossed it to the next one, and there he found that the next two were a little lower than either the Jew's or the one on the other side of it.

It took him but a moment to drop down to the roof of the adjoining house, and in a moment more he was down upon the roof of the one adjoining that.

"So fur so good, anyhow," he meditated. "It might be a great deal worse, an' I s'pose I ought to be thankful that I am alive. Now let's see vhat th' next move in th' game is ter be."

CHAPTER VII.

A VERY UNJUST SETTLEMENT.

THOMAS WALTON'S will was a subject of much debate among those who had known him best.

Why he had left everything to Henry Richards and nothing to Robert Walton, nobody could understand.

Had it been the other way, it would not have been so surprising. Robert had always been looked upon as the favored one, as he had deserved to be, while his cousin had held second place. The old gentleman had always shown,

or at least had seemed to show, a preference for Robert, and anybody would have said that Henry was a lucky dog if he had received half of the property.

But, for some reason or other, the tables had been turned at the last moment, it appeared, and Robert was cut off altogether.

Robert took it in good part, saying that it had been his grandfather's to give, and since he had not seen fit to leave anything to him, it was all right.

For this some of his friends called him a fool. They advised him to carry the matter into the courts and fight for an equal share of the wealth. This he would not do.

Others raised the cry of fraud, and some even went so far as to suggest in a roundabout way that the will was a forgery. This last brought forward the lawyer and the witnesses, who attested to the genuineness of the document.

That point being settled, people were curious to know what Henry would do for Robert, expecting, of course, that he would give him a certain share regardless of the will.

But this Henry did not do.

This was as great a surprise as the first had been, but it was soon learned that there was a third party interested, and that the third party was a woman.

The cousins were rivals in love.

Minnie Hastings, the object of their devotion, was the daughter of a rich banker, and she was a very pretty girl. She was about twenty years of age, and was the acknowledged belle of the circle in which she moved. It was not known whether she had or had not shown her preference, but Dame Gossip now looked upon it as certain that she would give her heart and hand to Henry Richards.

On the day of which we write, and at about the same time when the events we have recorded were taking place in the house of the old money-lender, Henry Richards called at Banker Hastings's house.

He asked for Minnie, and in a short time the young lady came down to the parlor.

After the greeting and some minor conversation, Henry remarked:

"You have not congratulated me upon my good fortune, Miss Hastings."

"And pray what is your good fortune?" Minnie asked. "Surely you do not refer to the death of your grandfather?"

Henry colored a little.

"No," he responded, "not at all. Death is an enemy we cannot escape, however, and while I mourn the loss of my grandfather, I think I am to be congratulated that he saw fit to leave his fortune to me."

"And what of your cousin, Robert?" the young lady inquired.

"Grandfather saw fit to disown him, in making his will," was the reply, "and of course he has nothing of the property."

"Which I consider very unjust, do not you?" Minnie observed and questioned.

"Well, it would look so," Henry had to admit, "but it was the old gentleman's wealth to do with as he saw fit, and it cannot be made any different."

"How does Robert feel about it?"

"Really I do not know. I am sorry to say that he and I are not on the very best of terms with each other, and he has very little to say to me."

"That is too bad. But of course you intend to give him something, do you not?" and as the girl put this question, she looked Henry squarely in the eyes.

"Why should I?" was the counter-question. "Should I do with my grandfather's wealth what he clearly did not want done with it?"

"It is no longer his, but yours," was the girl's reply to that.

"No matter, I must consider whence it came."

"Suppose all had been left to Robert and nothing to you, how would you feel about it then?" the young lady next asked.

"In that case I would have to make the best of it, the same as Robert is trying to do, I suppose," Henry declared.

"I see you are determined to do nothing, then, though it is all in your power to do if you would. You could give Robert a quarter of the wealth at least, and never miss it. I am sorry it was not divided equally between you."

"I see you are determined to champion Robert's cause," Henry observed.

"I always take side with the wronged one in every cause," was the arch retort.

"Well, let us drop the matter for the present, Miss Hastings. I—"

"Certainly, if it is distasteful to you, as it no doubt is."

"I was about to say that I have called upon a matter of great moment—great to me, at least."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. And can you not guess what it is I would say?"

"I am not good at guessing."

"For a long time, Miss Hastings, I have loved you, but I dared not speak of it to you until I could be sure what my future was to be in regard to wealth. Now, however, since I am secure in my position, I am here to ask you to become my wife."

"You certainly do me great honor."

"And you will accept?"

"No."

"Oh! do not say that! You know what my grandfather's wealth was, and now it is all mine. Think of what is before you with such wealth at your command."

"That is precisely what I am thinking of—what is before me, and it is that that leads me to say no to your proposal."

"Then you mean to refuse me?"

"I certainly do. I would not marry you under any consideration. I do not love you, and I would never think of marrying a man I did not love."

"But you would certainly learn to love me, for I promise you that I would be so devoted and true to you that you could not help loving me. Please do not say no, but rather say that you will think about it and give me a decided answer at some other time. That would leave me some hope."

"I had rather tell you now and have it ended for once and all. I do not care for you, and I can never marry you. Please let this end it."

"Oh! I cannot give you up!" the young man cried. "I have loved you for a long time, and I have looked forward to this day with the fondest of expectations. And now you have dashed my hopes to the ground and have crushed them under your feet."

"I am sorry," was the consoling response, "but I cannot help it. You have my decided answer, so please let the subject drop forever."

"Then you can give me no word of hope?"

"None whatever."

Henry Richards's manner changed and a look of stern determination came into his eyes. He rose to go, saying:

"I am very sorry that you cannot accept me, but I shall not give up hope that you will yet change your mind. I will bid you good-afternoon."

There was no threat in what he said, but his look might have been interpreted to express more than words.

"I, too, am sorry, in one respect," returned the girl, "but I am glad that we now understand each other perfectly. Good-afternoon."

Henry Richards took his leave, and in no pleasant frame of mind.

"Fiends take the little beauty!" he hissed as he walked away from the house, "she has snubbed me in the very worst kind of way. I do love her now, more than ever, and she shall be mine in spite of herself. The trouble is, she thinks she is in love with Robert, curse him! and she is blind to everything else. Well, there is one consolation, he is a beggar and I hold the boodle."

The young man went home, and some time later Robert Walton entered the house and inquired of a servant if he was in.

Henry invited Robert to come up to his room, and when he arrived there and had closed the door after him, Robert said:

"Henry, I am here to ask a favor of you. In the first place I suppose you are willing to have me make this my home for the present, are you not?"

"I have no objections to that," was the answer, "but at the same time I think it will be well for you to make other arrangements as early as convenient. I think of marrying ere long, and—"

"Oh! I shall not trouble you long with my presence," Robert hastened to assure. "And perhaps I had better not mention the favor I had in mind to ask of you."

"Let me hear what it is," Henry requested.

"Well, it is this: The will grandfather left was so contrary to my expectations, for I thought he would remember me as well as you, that I am in rather a bad fix. If you would let me have about fifteen thousand dollars, with plenty of time, it would put me upon my feet and give me a chance to do something for myself. Can you do this?"

"No," was the blunt answer. "I am sorry to say that I cannot. I have plenty and to spare, it is true, but it has always been a busi-

ness principle of mine never to lend money without ample security."

"Pardon me for asking you," faltered Robert, "but I thought you were at least a man. I shall at once pack up whatever personal effects I have in the house, and will send for them as soon as possible."

"No need for such haste, Robert, for you are welcome—"

"There is need for all the haste I can employ," was the calm retort. "I am sorry I came here, but I based my hopes upon what I would do were I in your place and you in mine."

With this, Robert Walton left the room, and in a little while took his departure from the house.

"That settles him," chuckled Henry, as he watched him from a window, "and now perhaps he will realize where he stands and make his presence beautifully less in this city."

It was with a heavy heart that Robert went away from the home he had known since early boyhood, but it was with a determined air that he turned his steps toward a cheap but respectable hotel in the lower part of the city.

There he engaged a room, and having paid for it for a considerable time in advance, retired to its welcome seclusion to meditate upon his plans for the future.

"My worst suspicions are now confirmed," he averred half aloud as he threw himself into a chair. "My first intention was to take it all without a murmur, but the treatment I have just received leads me to believe that I would be a fool to do so, just as my friends have declared. No, there is something crooked in it all, and I will know what it is. I have some money, and I will employ a lawyer and a detective and fight it to the end. No doubt I shall be able to wrest half of it from my friendly cousin."

CHAPTER VIII.

BILLY SURPRISES SKINNY.

"SWEET pertaters!"

Broadway Billy was beginning to think that he was not going to get down from the house-tops that night.

"Too much of a good thing is no good at all," he growled, "an' I am beginnin' ter think that I have got about enough of this fun. Wonder how I am ter git down from here, anyhow. Shouldn't wonder if I was ter foller off a yaller dog behind some wagon, th' next thing I do. Here I have put my foot into a purty mess of fix, sure pop. It was bad enough down there in th' chimbley, but it ain't much better ter be prisoned up here than it was down there. If I was ter meet Inspector Br— Hello! here is an idee, an' in full bloom, too! Reckon I'll freeze onder it while it is ripe."

With this exclamation and the remark that followed it, the boy left the house he was then on and started across to the next one.

On the top of that one were several clothes-line poles, and on the poles was a line. And it was the latter that had attracted the boy's attention.

As soon as he reached it he examined it with a critical eye.

"Just th' stuff!" he exclaimed. "I have never seen Broadway Billy git inter a fix yet that he didn't git out of again. It is no more use their tryin' ter dispose of me than it is in their tryin' ter fly. They can't do neither one. I am here ter stay, an' th' sooner they all find it out th' better it will be fer th' health of a considerable number of 'em. I don't mean stay here on th' top o' this lordly mansion, goodness, no! but I mean stay right on deck ter cope with all sorts o' villainy that happens ter crop out anywhere, we bet!"

The boy set to work at once to take the line down from its place on the poles, and in a short time it was in his possession.

"Oh, we'll be happy yet," he joyfully cogitated. "If this rope will only let me down ter terry firmy, it is all I ask of it. Then I reckon I will run down and see my fat partner an' see if he'll know me. Great cats! but I must be a sight ter behold! Th' way I did scoop th' scot off o' that chimbley was a caution. Guess it has never been cleaned since th' house was built. Reckon it won't be a bad idee ter send in my bill ter th' old Jew fer services as chimbley-sweep."

While these thoughts were running through his mind he was busily winding up the rope on his arm, and as soon as he had done he returned to the adjoining house, as that was the lowest one in the row.

And now another idea came to him. Would it be safe for him to try to get down now? Would it not be better for him to wait until dark? If he tried it now he would no doubt be

seen, and he might be taken for a thief and arrested.

This was not altogether a pleasing prospect, so he decided to wait for the friendly shades of night before making the attempt.

He had not long to wait, for it was beginning to grow dark already, so he spent the time in tying the rope around the chimney that stood nearest to the rear of the roof, and in calculating its length and the distance to the ground.

In about half an hour it was dark enough for him to act, so taking up the rope he let it down over the edge of the roof, carefully, until it was all run out.

"Quite a long reach o' rope," he thought, "an' I reckon it must reach th' ground. If it don't it can't be fur from it, an' as th' way is all clear down there I kin easy drop the rest of the distance. An' now here goes."

Having made sure before this that the rope was perfectly sound, and that it was fastened securely to the chimney, he now took a firm hold of it and let himself down over the edge of the roof and began to descend.

Billy was a strong boy, and this was not a very hard thing for him to do. He wound the rope around one leg, as he had often seen circus performers do, and this rendered the descent easy.

In a short time he stood on the ground, and found that the rope was long enough and to spare.

"Thought I had plenty o' line," he commented, as he wound it up and laid it up close to the side of the house, "an' I reckon I'll leave it right here so's ter have it handy in case I should want ter use it again. Reckon I'll have ter leave it here anyhow, seein' as I can't very well get it down; but as ter usin' it again, I hardly think I'll want ter visit th' tops o' these lordly mansions any more."

At that moment a door opened right near to where Billy was standing, and a woman stepped out into the yard.

This was something that was not set down in Billy's programme.

The boy drew back into the corner of the house and fence, hoping that he would not be seen, and watched the woman to learn what she intended to do.

It was no doubt a servant, as he reasoned it out, for in the light of the open door he had been able to see her face and attire quite plainly, and no doubt she would go in again immediately.

Billy had noticed a little gate in the rear side of the fence while he was yet upon the house, and it opened upon what seemed to be a narrow alley. To this gate the woman advanced, opened it, and passed out.

"She can't be goin' fur," Billy reasoned, "or she would have shut th' door of th' house after her, that seems ter me ter be a sure thing. I'll wait here a minute or two and see if she won't come back, an' then when th' coast is clear I'll take my departure hence."

He waited not only a minute or two, but fully ten, and then as there were no signs of the woman's returning he stepped out from his corner and advanced toward the gate where she had disappeared.

Just as he reached the gate, and was about to step out, the woman met him face to face.

"Oo-o-h!" she screamed, "who are you?" Billy lifted both hands on high, and in deep and solemn tones answered:

"I am the ghost of John J. Christopher Benjamin Bimms."

With a wild yell of terror the woman turned and fled away from the alley as fast as ever she could go, while Billy, almost convulsed with laughter, made as good speed in the opposite direction.

The alley ran right under a house, at the end, and there it was closed in with a heavy gate. This gate was hooked near the top, and it took the boy but a moment to open it and place himself on the other side.

"Here I be," he exultantly muttered, "just as good as I was afore, but not quite so beautiful, perhaps. Beauty don't count, though, when there is persistent pluck in a feller's make-up, an' that is jest what I claim ter have in me. If I only had some brains ter back it up I would be happy, but since I haven't I shall have ter blunder along th' best I kin. Now fer a visit down ter Skinny."

Having taken a good survey of the neighborhood so that he could find the alley again without any trouble, if necessary, he set out for his place of business.

On the way there he attracted a good deal of attention, but he cared nothing for that, and in due time he arrived at the corner stand and found Skinny there as attentive to duty as ever.

Billy stopped in front of the stand and pretended to be about to pick up some of the wares. Skinny's eye was upon him instantly.

"Hold on there, jet-black," he ordered, "keep yer hands off o' things here."

"Who'm you talkin' to?" demanded Billy.

"I'm talkin' ter you," was Skinny's retort.

"You want ter keep yer paws off o' things here an' move on."

"Who's goin' ter make me do it if I don't want ter?" Billy asked in a tone of defiance, changing his voice and drawing his face so as to escape recognition.

Skinny got up and took a step forward.

"I'll mighty soon show you, if you give me any of yer lip," he boasted.

"Say, young feller," Billy advised, "you had better keep cool. You're too fat fer any great exertion, an' th' excitement of th' task might set yer blood ter circulatin' an' kill ye."

Billy was still speaking in a changed tone, but this speech was so characteristic of him that it gave him away. Skinny looked at him more closely, and then he exclaimed:

"Billy! What in th' land o' Goshen has happened ye?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Billy laughed, "ye did git onter me, didn't ye, Skinny. How do ye like my new disguise?"

"Disguise!"

"Cert."

"Look here, Billy, do yer mean ter say that you put that on ye fer a disguise? What is it anyhow?"

"Can't ye see what it is?" Billy asked.

"Looks like a suit o' black wool," declared Skinny.

"You'd better look a little closer, then, fer yer eyes must be goin' back on ye. Can't ye see that I am covered with smut from my head to my heels?"

Skinny stepped forward and took a nearer view, and then he looked at Billy in a most pitying manner.

"Billy," he said, "I always thought that you was a little lackin' in yer upper story, an' now I know it fer sure. If you put yerself inter sich a mess as this jest ter make up a disguise, you orter be tied to a mule's tail an' kicked ter death. If th' fool-killer comes around, you had better keep out o' sight."

Billy laughed heartily.

"Skinny," he presently confided, "I have a tale ter onwind ter ye, th' lightest word of which will make yer hair curl wuss'n th' fretful quills upon th' peaceful porkswine. Where do you think I have been?"

"I give it up," answered Skinny, "but to judge ye by yer 'pearance I should think ye had been makin' a call upon his Majesty down below."

"You ain't fur wrong, Skinny, by ginger!" Billy exclaimed. "You have come closer to th' truth this time than ye generally do."

"Well, where have ye been?" Skinny demanded.

Billy went ahead then and related his adventure, and Skinny listened with intense interest.

"What d'ye think about it all?" Billy asked as he concluded.

"I think that you will keep on till you put your foot into it so fur that you won't never git it out ag'in no more," was the candid answer.

"You have come purty close to it several times, an' now it seems that th' men you have been after have got ye marked, an' I wouldn't give a nickel fer your life."

"That's your opine, eh? Well, jest hear me orate, now, an' then sum it up an' tell me how it stands. This is not th' fu'st time that I have had everything against me, but here I am yet, as chipper as kin be. An' I am likely ter stay so, too. I am real old p'izen after any sort o' villainy, an' whenever there is any afoot it seems that I am bound ter be around. Now, fer instance, take this case. Here they all think that I am shut up in th' bottom of that old chimblly, while here I be as chipper as kin be."

"You'll git it yet, though."

"Mebby I will, but I hardly think so. I have escaped so often now that I think I must have a charmed life, an' I ruther think I am bound ter live till I die. I mean ter show Inspector Br—Hello! hang me if here don't come Detective Speare!"

CHAPTER IX.

TWO CASES IN ONE.

"SAY, mister, I want ter have a game o' talk wi' you."

Thus did Broadway Billy address Detective Speare.

But, we are getting a little ahead of our

story, for this was after the detective had come up to the corner stand and spoken to Skinny.

Previously, as soon as he had caught sight of the detective, Billy had given the junior partner the wink not to let on who he was.

"Good-evening, Skinny," the detective had said, on coming up; "where is your worthy partner?"

"Haven't got any," was Skinny's ready reply.

"Not got any? What do you mean now?"

"Oh! Billy got th' detective fever again this afternoon when he got that note from you, an' he went off post-haste."

"A note from me," repeated the detective in wondering tones; "I have sent him no note."

"Well, he got one all th' same, an' off he went."

"This is strange, mighty strange," Speare mused. "Have you any idea what was in the note?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Skinny, "th' note told him ter come right away to a certain house on a certain street, an' it had your name signed to it."

"Stars and Stripes! but there is something in this, my boy. Where was he told to come? I will look after him at once. We can't afford to let Broadway Billy get hurt."

"Bless me if I remember where it was," Skinny answered truthfully.

"That is bad, mighty bad," muttered Speare, as he tugged at his mustache.

Billy here thought that it was about time for him to chip in, and so he did, with the exclamation with which this chapter opens.

Speare turned instantly and looked at him, and then he exclaimed:

"Followers of Mohammed! boy, what have you been doing to yourself?"

"Been takin' a sun-bath in a dye-tub," was the ready reply.

"Well, I should say that you had," the detective commented. "You look as if somebody had used you to swab chimneys with."

"There! you have hit it th' first shot!" the boy cried. "You couldn't come closer to it if somebody had told you. That is jest what I've been doin', an' no mistook."

"And what about the note you received that had my name to it?" the detective next inquired.

"That was what played th' dickens with me," Billy declared. "Ye see I didn't stop to question whether th' thing was O. K. or not, but went right off at half-cock. It said that you wanted me, an' that settled it."

"And did that note lead to the state you are now in?"

"It did, fer sure."

"Well, here is something that I cannot understand. What has happened to you? Give an account of yourself, sir."

"That is what I want ter do," Billy declared. "I want ter have a game o' talk wi' ye, as I remarked before, an' then I'll let ye onter th' bull racket. There is blood on ther moon, sure's ye'r' born."

"Go right ahead," Speare invited, "and we will see what there is in it. I am here purposely to see you, fer I want to use you."

"I reckon I have been used almost enough already," Billy observed with a sickly smile.

"And pretty badly used, too, I should say," Speare supplemented. "But," he added, "go ahead with your story."

"Perhaps afore I begin ter onwind my tale o' woe, we had better draw a little aside from th' main thurryfare," Billy now proposed. "I seem ter be attractin' a good deal of 'tention."

"Not a bad suggestion," the detective agreed.

They stepped down into a side street for a little way, stopping presently under the friendly glow of a street lamp, and there the boy began his story.

"Fu'st of all," he commenced, "I will show ye th' letter I got, an' then ye kin have a better idee of what it was that sent me off ter clean chimbllys," and as he spoke he felt in his pockets for the document.

Presently he found it, but it was so black by the time that he had extracted it from his pocket that Speare declined to touch it.

"Hold open the envelope," he directed, "and I will draw it out. You would soon have me as black as yourself if I would let you."

Billy did as directed, and the detective got the note out comparatively clean.

He read it carefully, and when he had done, remarked:

"This is not a bad imitation of my hand, and I am rather curious to learn who wrote it. I can hardly blame you for obeying it, though an older head than yours would have discovered suspicious signs in it."

"There!" cried Billy, "that is jest what I have thought all along. I haven't got enough brains ter be a detective, an' I might as well give it up first as last. My head is full o'—"

"There," interrupted Speare, "never mind lamenting your shortcomings now, but get on with your story."

"Kerreck. Well, I went to th' house named an' went in accordin' ter th' instructions. No sooner was I in, though, than I was picked up an' toted off down cellar where they had everything arranged fer my reception. They had a big hole made in the base of th' chimby, an' as soon as they had fastened my hands an' feet an' my jaws, they stuffed me inter th' hole an' bricked it up as tight as it had ever been."

"The fiends!" the detective cried.

"Jest so," Billy agreed.

"Did you learn what they did it for?"

"Yes, fer they made it a p'int ter tell me that. It seems they are friends of Bob Carter, one of th' fellers we sent up th' river on that last case we had, an' they wanted ter put me out of th' way fer revenge."

"I expected it would come to that, sooner or later," the detective observed. "Did you learn who any of the rascals were?"

"Yes, I got onter th' haze o' one of 'em, an' his name is Plover."

"Hiram Plover? I know something about him, and I would like to get a case against him so as to bring him to what he deserves."

"Well, I reckon ye will have jest th' chance ye want now," declared Billy, "fer he has jest taken a contract ter kill a man."

"The dickens he has!"

"Sure pop. But, I haven't finished my story. When th' men went away and left me there in th' chimby, I nat'rally begun ter plot an' plan ter git out o' ther hole as soon as I could. Ter make a long story short, I found a sharp corner o' brick behind me, an' on that I wore out th' strings that held my hands, an' th' rest was easy. Then I tried ter push down th' wall they had put up, but couldn't do it, so I set out ter climb up ther chimby to ta' top."

"Little wonder that you are black."

"I should say not. An' now comes th' business part o' my story. Th' house I was in is th' home o' one Moses Levi, a money-lender—"

"Ha! another deserving rascal, I think."

"You kin bet high that he is, and yer money will be safe every time. He is about th' wu'st pill in th' hull box."

"Well, go on."

"Prezackly. I started up th' flume, as I said, an' it wasn't none too easy work, I kin tell ye. An' when I had got up quite a ways I kem to a place where was a chimby-hole, an' there I could look down inter a room. There was th' old Jew an' a purty gal that turned out ter be his darter, an' he was givin' her rats about a feller that she wanted ter marry an' was tellin' her that she had ter marry another one that he had picked out. She was th' best man of th' two, I reckon, an' I think she kin git away with her dad in a fair fight. Well, th' old man fired her out of th' room, an' then purty soon he sent fer this Plover, an' then I got right onter th' meat of th' pie. He told Plover if he would put th' other feller out of th' way, he could have th' girl fer his wife, an' Plover 'greed ter do it. An' now onfolds another chapter. Th' old Jewsharp don't mean ter keep faith with Plover at all, but means ter use him fer all he is worth, an' after he has killed Robert Walton th' girl has got ter marry Henry Richards anyhow."

At the mention of these names Detective Speare's eyes fairly bulged out.

"Boy," he cried, "do you know that you are a wonder on wheels? You have got hold of the very thread that I am in search of, as I certainly believe."

"Don't know anything about my bein' a wonder on wheels, nor nothin' of that kind," returned Billy, "but if we have both got hold of th' same string, you kin bet that somethin' is goin' ter happen when we begin ter pull. An' now what did ye want ter see me fer?"

"Let us walk along slowly and I will tell you what it is, and I think you can render me great assistance in the matter."

They started on, and as they walked the detective told the boy something of the case he had in hand.

"There is more crooked work going on than you have got hold of yet," he began, "and there will be fun for us both before it is done with. I will give you an outline of my case, so that you will understand what I want in event of any points falling in your way. Robert Walton came to me late this afternoon, and put the matter into my hands. His grandfather has recently died, leaving him nothing of his

wealth, but everything to his cousin, Henry Richards."

"Yes, I got onto somethin' of that kind," Billy observed.

"And," continued the detective, "young Walton thinks there has been foul work of some kind going on, and he wants me to find out whatever I can about the matter. Now you have made a good start upon this very case, for I believe the whole thing will be hatched out there in that old Jew's house."

"It is very likely," Billy agreed.

"I intended to let you go up to the Walton residence and find out all you could about Henry Richards, for you have got cheek enough to go there and claim full possession of the whole house; but now I will put you on another tack, provided you are willing to help me in the work. And then when we bring down the game it will be a little surprise-party for the rascals who have tried to put you out of the way, and who now think you are perfectly secure down in the base of the chimney."

"Oh, I am with ye, every time," the boy cried. "You jest say what ye want me ter do, an' I am right on my muscle in a minute. I 'most always go it on my own hook in this detective business, but as we pull together purty well, an' as this case is 'most all yours anyhow, I won't kick."

"Well, I think that you can do a big stroke by going back to that old Jew's chimney and taking another peep into his room. It is pretty certain that there will be something more to learn there, as you are in right shape now for such work, it will not soil your clothes any. What do you say?"

"I'll do it!" Billy cried. "There isn't enough soot left in that chimby ter do me any hurt, an' now I kin let down a rope that will make it all th' easier ter do th' climbin'. First, though, I must strike fer home an' git some supper, pervided my appearance don't send my old mammy off inter fits."

Some further conversation took place, and then the two parted, there being a well-arranged understanding between them.

CHAPTER X.

BACK TO THE CHIMNEY.

BROADWAY BILLY went straight home, trying to brush off as much superfluous soot as possible on the way.

"It won't never do fer me ter black up th' house with this smut," he debated in thought as he hastened along, "fer if I do, mom will raise my scalp quicker'n a Sioux Injun could think o' doin' it. Must manage ter git a little of th' wu'st of it off somehow. I feel sort o' 'shamed o' myself, an' no mistake. An' I shouldn't wonder if she'd feel as much 'shamed as I do, fer I am her only son an' th' pride of her life. That's 'cause I am so purty, I s'pose."

When he reached home he ventured into the hall, and there called to his mother to come down to him.

Billy's home was in one of the populous downtown tenement-houses, but not one of the lowest order, and his mother was very particular about her rooms. For this reason the boy could not think of going up in the condition he was in. He and his mother lived comfortably and well, and their rooms were as neatly furnished as any in the house.

"What do you want, Billy?" Mrs. Weston called out, from the head of the stairs on the floor where their rooms were.

"Come down here, quick," the boy answered. "Got somethin' of 'portance ter say ter ye. Don't delay a minute."

"Well, I'll come down, Billy," agreed the good woman, "but if you are fooling me you just remember what you will get."

"Oh, I'll bear that in mind, sure," Billy avowed. "I really don't know what it would be, though," he added, "but I s'pose it would be somethin' awful."

"That certainly would," his mother averred as she came on down the steps, "and I hope I shall never have occasion to give it to you."

"So do I, from th' depths of my boots," rejoined Billy.

The lower hall was lighted, but the boy stood back out of sight until his mother was nearly down the last of the steps, and then he stepped out and faced her.

"Goodness sakes alive!" the good woman cried, and she threw up her hands in horror.

"Don't be alarmed," enjoined the boy, "fer it is me."

"And where have you been to get in such a mess as that?" his mother demanded. "What in the world have you been up to now?"

"Been up to me ears in soot," Billy explained.

"I have turned chimby-sweep fer a change," he added. "How do you like my rig?"

"I don't like it at all, and I should think that you would be ashamed of it, to come home in such a plight as this. Your clothes are ruined now, and I have a notion to give you—"

"My supper?" interrupted Billy; "just what I am here for, mother dear, and as you do not seem inclined to ask me up to your palatial apartments I must ask you to be so kind as to bring me something down here."

This was said with all the airs and correctness of speech that the boy could command.

Mrs. Weston, however, would do nothing until Billy had told her all about his adventure, and then she felt none the better for knowing it. She, like Skinny, lamented the fact that the "fever" had broken out again, for she well knew the dangers he ran into in his detective exploits. It was of no use, however, for her to try to turn him from his purpose, for she might as well have tried to turn Manhattan Island; so she brought him some bread and meat, and after cautioning him over and over again to keep out of danger, allowed him to depart.

Billy loved his mother, and it pained him to think that she would not shut her eyes in sleep until she knew that he was safe, as he knew well enough would be the case; but he could no more give up his adventure than he could cut off his hand.

"Sorry ter keep mom in a fret and stew, as she calls it," he mused, as he set out for his field of adventure, munching away at his bread and meat as he walked, "but it can't be helped. Duty calls an' I must away. If I was ter give up th' biz at this stage, all my past labors an' experience would be in vain. No, no, I couldn't think o' doin' sich a thing. I can't help bein' a detective any more than I can help bein' good-lookin'."

More than one policeman eyed the boy keenly as he passed along the streets, but they evidently did not care to meddle with so dirty a specimen of humanity unless they were actually compelled to.

In due time Billy arrived at the gate that opened upon the alley, and proceeded to open it, having waited until there was no person near him to see what he was doing.

The gate was secured on the inside near the top with a hook, and there was a small hole below fer persons to put their handsthrugh to unhook it.

Billy reached up and put his hand in at the hole, and in a moment more was safely inside and the gate was secured as before.

"Now comes ther tug o' war," he mused. "That woman that I frightened so may have a bulldog on hand now, and if so I reckon I will be in a purty bad fix. Or wu'ss still, she may have a man there with a gun. There's no use borryin' trouble afore it comes, though, I reckon, so I won't fret myself inter any diffikilties until I see 'em a-sproutin' up. Then it will be time enough fer me ter cope with 'em."

He started down the alley, taking care not to make any more noise than he could not help, and at the same time watching sharply for the house where he had left the rope hanging from the chimney.

In coming away he had taken care to look around so that he would be able to find the same place again, in case it should be necessary for him to do so, and of course he had a pretty good idea how far down the alley he would have to go.

It was not so dark but he could see objects around him, nor was it very light. The outlines of the housetops, in particular, were in bold relief.

"This is th' place, I reckon," he presently decided after a careful look around when he thought he had gone about far enough. "Yes," he added, "this is th' same gate, an' now if that woman didn't fasten it I will be all right. Hope she won't come around again, fer th' ghost of th' late lamented Mr. Bimms might not scare her off so easy another time."

While he was thus muttering to himself he tried the gate, and much to his disgust, found that it was fastened.

"Jest my luck," he complained. "How in th' world is th' ghost of Bimms ter overcome this here diffikilty? It is enough ter make him give up the ghost business an' go ter peddlin' clams. Reckon I'll have ter climb th' fence, or else stay where I am. An' then won't it be pleasant, when I drop down on th' other side, ter hev a big bull-pup lay hold of my left leg?"

If the boy had any dread of dogs he did not let it trouble him long, for he was soon up on the fence and ready to drop over.

He waited a moment to see if there would be

any challenge or warning of any kind, and as there was none, and no one was to be seen or heard, he let go his hold and silently dropped over.

Then he paused again for a few moments before going any further, but as there came no sound to alarm him, nor anything that might be taken for an enemy, he finally made his way along the fence to the house.

Once there he felt for the rope.

There it was, in the same place where he had left it, and now he began to look upon the success of his venture as assured.

"Here we be," he cogitated, "an' now fer th' climb ter th' top of th' house. I reckon I am good fer it, fer I have done some tall climbin' in my career, ter say nothin' of havin' served my time as a chimbley-sweep. Here goes for it."

Taking a good hold of the rope, testing its strength to assure himself that it was as he had left it, and gathering all his strength for the effort, he pulled himself up and began to climb.

Now it is no easy task to climb a rope hand over hand, but Billy's arms were tough and strong and he went up quite a distance before he had to stop to rest.

"Here we be so fur up, anyhow," he gasped, in a whisper, "an' here we'll stop fer a minute ter rest. There's no use in doin' it all at once, fer then th' fun would be all over afore it was fairly commenced. I always like ter git th' worth of my money out of a thing."

Unless Broadway Billy could talk to himself he was not happy; and when he could not speak his thoughts aloud he engaged himself in conversation mentally.

When he had rested for a few moments he started forward again, and this time did nearly as well as on the first spurt. And two more trials carried him to the top.

When he gained the roof he was glad enough to sit down and rest for some time before trying to do anything more.

"If this was all of it," he meditated, "it would not be so bad, but I have got ter go an' crawl down inter that chimbley, which isn't pleasant at all. I have had more fun than that lots of times. It has got ter be did, however, an' I guess I am th' sinner that's elected ter do it."

When he was sufficiently rested he pulled up the rope, wound it up, untied it from the chimney, and crossed silently over to the home of the old money-lender.

"This seems like home," he observed in thought, "though I haven't been stoppin' here very long. It is a case of when th' swallows homeward fly, I guess, for th' swallows live in chimbleys, an' that is where I am bound fur. I wouldn't cat a very graceful figger at flyin', I reckon, but I guess I will get there all th' same. An' now let me seek my flue."

Having tied the rope securely around the chimney, first at the bottom and again at the top, he let it down slowly and carefully into the flue.

"So fur so good," he thought, "an' now ter git in myself an' go down ter inspect th' regions below again. It will be some easier this time, I guess, an' not quite so wearin' on my knees an' elbows. I feel as though I had been run through a sausage machine or somethin' in that line."

Climbing up onto the top of the chimney, the boy let himself carefully down, making as little noise as he could, and taking a firm hold of the rope as soon as he was well into the flue, began to descend.

Down he went, slowly and carefully, keeping the rope turned around one leg in the same manner as he had done in descending from the roof of the house, and there was little trouble or difficulty in the task.

But it seemed a long distance down to the hole where he had looked into the room, as it had seemed an endless distance when he was climbing out. He finally reached it, though, and looking through, saw that there was no one in the room.

"Nobody ter home, eh?" he mused, as he glanced around the semi-lighted apartment as far as he could see. "This isn't by any means encouragin', after all th' trouble I have been put to ter come here. S'pose it is all my own fault, though, fer no doubt if I had sent word that I was comin' there would have been some one here ter meet me—with a club. As it is, I'll jest wait here a while an' see if somethin' won't turn up. Somethin' most allus does, when I'm around, even if it ain't allus healthy fer me in th' turnin'. When th' second turn comes 'round, though, then I am purty likely ter turn up on top, an' that's why I pull sich a strong stroke

with Inspector Br— Hello! here comes somebody, sure pop."

The door opened, and Moses Levi walked in.

CHAPTER XI.

BILLY HEARS SOMETHING MORE.

"SWEET pertaters!" Broadway Billy exclaimed under his breath, "but here comes old Jewsharps, anyhow. Now mebbey there will be some sort o' developments in th' near future, or devilments, or somethin' in that line. Let 'em come, an' th' more th' merrier."

The old Jew closed the door after him, crossed the room to the table, turned up the gas, and sat down.

And then he gave vent to his thoughts aloud. "Id do peat all," he muttered, "dot when I t'ink I am pooty vell oop, den I am pooty vell down already rightd away gwick. No sooner do I set flofer to put dot Robert Valtan oud mit der vay, so as mine taughter can have a gear field to vin his gousin, when I find me oudt dot Henry he lofe another girl. Dot vas a nice fix of t'ings, py Choseph id vas."

"In this world we can't have everything to please us, uncle," whispered the young detective to himself. "You will find that there is many a slip between th' pump an' th' coffee pot, or whatever it is, afore you are a thousand years older than you are now. You are a sly old rat, but you have got to git right up an' hump yourself if you expect ter come out ahead in this race."

The money-lender sat for a few moments in silence, and then he broke out in the same strain again.

"Yes," he grated, "dot ish vhat I vill do, py chiminy! I vill put t'e girl out of der vay too, and den id vill pe all gear sailing. Dot ish der only t'ing to pe done, und dot ish vhat I vill do."

"You will, will you? you p'izen old penny-pincher!" thought Broadway Billy. "I reckon there will be somebody else ter have a say in th' matter afore you do so much wadin' in gore as you're talkin' about jest now. It makes me tired ter bear ye makin' sich great kalkerlations on what ye're goin' ter do, when I know purty well that ye ain't goin' ter do nothin' of th' sort."

About that time there came a knock at the door.

"Coom een," the old Jew invited, and he faced around to learn who it was.

The door opened and Dick Crabber entered.

"Vhy, mine tear Tick," the old rascal cried, "how you vas peen? I vas glad to seen you. Shake."

Crabber extended his hand, but in a way that led the watching boy to suspect that he was being greeted with more than usual warmth.

"Hang me if that ain't another of th' fellers that shut me up in th' chimbley," Billy had mentally exclaimed at the first sight of Crabber; "an' th' old Sheeny seems ter take him sort o' by storm with his hearty welcome," he added. "Th' old rat has somethin' fer him ter do, or some favor to ask, sure as guns."

"And I am glad to see you, too," Crabber returned, as he gave his hand. "I hope you had a good time while away."

"Had a pully dime, Grabber, a pully dime. Set rightd down now, und ve vill had a goot old chat."

Crabber took the seat the old Jew indicated, remarking:

"I came to see my friend Plover, and ventured up to ask you where I can find him, or when he will be in; as I was told that he is now out."

"Yes, Plover is oudt, and I don't know when he vill pe in. But, don't let dot drouble you, for I assure you dot I am yust so goot a feller as Plover ish, efery dime."

Crabber looked as though he doubted this very much, but was willing to let the old man have his way.

"That is right, old money-bags," thought Billy, "you pet him up a little an' then spring yer trap on him, whatever it is. He will bite, I am thinkin', if ye put plenty o' money on th' bait-hook."

Mr. Levi took hold of the bell-rope now, and gave it a sharp pull.

"I vill give you somedings vhat vill made you shmile," he promised, giving a meaning wink at his companion.

In a few moments a woman appeared, and the old man gave her orders to bring up some wine and glasses.

"You see, Crabber," he confided in a lower tone, when the woman had gone out to bring

the liquor, "I hafe had mine eye upon you for some time, and I hafe somedings to tell you dot vill please you ferry much, I t'ink."

"Yes?" Crabber questioned, not knowing what to say, and no doubt wondering what could be coming next.

"You pet!" cried Mr. Levi. "I t'ink I can make you a happy man, if you vill let me do id. Ha, ha, ha!"

Crabber smiled.

"I have no objections to being made happy," he observed.

"You know mine taughter Repeckah?"

"Certainly."

"Vell vhat you t'ink of her?"

"Deuced fine girl, Mr. Levi, and no mistake."

"Ha, ha, ha! I thought you would say dot. Yes, she ish a fine girl, efen if I do say it mine-self, und she vas yust as goot and pooty as she vas fine. Und now, py der vay, mine frent Grabber, how would you like to marry dot girl?" Crabber's eyes bulged out like porcelain door-knobs.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Yust vhat I said."

"And do you mean that you would give me your daughter, if I should ask you for her?"

"You yust try und seen."

"I cannot understand it."

"Den I vill try und make you understood id. I like you pooty vell, Grabber, und I would yust like such a veller as you pe to marry dot girl. Vhat do you said to dot?"

"It is too good to be true," Crabber responded for he was rather wily in his way. "You do not mean what you say. You have some object to gain in this, old man, and you think to shut my eye. What are you coming at?"

"Bully fer you, Crab-catcher," Broadway Billy exclaimed in mind. "You are up to date, but I'm afraid that you ain't half sharp enough ter cope with that old villain, and you want ter keep both yer eyes peeled. Ten ter one he takes ye in afore he is done with ye, an' if he don't I'll try to, that is sure."

Mr. Levi drew a long face and looked injured.

"Grabber," he whined, "you do me wrong. You do me wrong indeed. I thought you knowed me petter as dot. You und me has been frient's for a long dime, und ve knows some t'ings apoudt each other vhat id would not pe vell to hafe outsiders know. Ain't dot so?"

"Yes, that is about the way it stands," Crabber admitted.

"Vhell, t'en, vhat's t'e matter of you? I hafe a bardicular biece of vork on hand, und I vant you to do id. Id ish not an easy chob, not py any means: und id ish a pad von, too. But, if you vill done id, you can hafe mine taughter to pe your vife, and t'en I vill pe sure dot you vill nefer exbose me in t'e matter, but vill hafe yust t'e same interest to geep t'e secret as vhat I vill mineself. Do you seen?"

Crabber eyed him keenly and added:

"I thought there was something of the kind back of it all. What is the job you have for me to do?"

"Not so fast, mine tear Tick," the old Jew admonished, "not so fast. I must know yust how you stand pefore I put mineself in your hands in such a case as this ish. You must allow me to ask you a question."

"Well, fire away."

"Do you lofe mine taughter?"

"Yes; everybody loves her."

"Und you would like to marry her?"

"I should be a fool if I wouldn't."

"I should say you would. Und t'en when I coom to tie, vhy you vill come in for all that I am worth."

Crabber's eyes burned greedily as he listened to this, but his head was too hard to take it all in as the truth? It was so unlike the old Jew's usual manner that he could not get the idea out of his mind that there must be some trick back of it.

"Look here, my old friend," he demanded, "vhat do you mean and what are you coming at?"

The Jew laughed.

"My tear Tick," he responded, "can you not believe me? I hafe told you yust vhat I vant and vhat I vill do. Vhy do you not dake me at my vord?"

"But what is your word? I am ready to marry your pretty daughter, you may be sure of that, and on any condition that you can name. If you mean business I am your man."

"Dot ish yust vhat I do mean, und now if we understand each other I vill gife you t'e plan of t'e vork I vant you to do."

"Well, go ahead and let me know what it is."

"Note yet, mine tear Tick, not yet. You must first swear that you vill never mention

what I say to you, if you find you do not want to do t'e vork."

"That is all right; I swear."

"Dot ish all righdt, und now I renew mine bromise dot you shall hafe mine taughter to pe your vife as soon as you hafe done t'e vork."

"You do not stop to think that the girl may have something to say about that, Mr. Levi," reminded Crabber.

"She vill hafe nothing to say apout id, pe sure of dot," hissed the old man. "Vhat I tell her to do she vill hafe to do. Und now are you villing to hear vhat I hafe to tell you?"

"Yes; go ahead."

"Vell, pay attention. Do you know Mr. Hastings, t'e banker?"

"Yes."

"Und his taughter?"

"I know her by sight. But, what on earth are you coming at?"

"Vell, now pay close attention. I vant you to get hold mit dot girl and put her out of t'e vay. I mean kill her and disbos of her endirely. Do you understand?"

"Do you mean that?"

"Dot ish yust vhat I do mean, and dot ish vhat for I vill give you mine taughter if you vill do id. There ish a big bropery at stake, and if dot girl ish out of t'e vay it vill all pe mine. Do you see t'e b'int?"

"Yes, now I fully understand what you want, and I can now see why you are willing to give me your daughter if I will do it for you."

"And vill you do id?"

"Yes, on the conditions that you name, I will undertake to do it. It is a serious thing, though, and I may fail in the undertaking, but I will have to run the risk of that."

"Goot!" cried the bloodthirsty old demon; "and now dere ish yust one more t'ing to say: You must not say von vord of this to Plofer or Repeckah until it ish all done, und den id vill pe our secret forever. Not von vord to anybody."

CHAPTER XII.

BILLY SEES SOMETHING.

"SWEET pertaters an' roast pork."

So the boy in the chimney inwarily exclaimed when he had listened to the culmination of the heinous plot.

"If them ain't about th' wu'st cases I ever got after," he mentally debated, "then I'll eat soot. An' th' old Jew is by a good deal th' wu'st of th' pair. When I yoke th' gang up an' trot 'em in afore Inspector Br— Hello! somebody else comin' in!"

The door opened, but it was only the woman who had been sent for the wine, and she put the bottle and glasses down upon the table and went out again immediately.

"Oh, it's only th' woman with th' jig-water," Billy observed. "I thought it might be another of the pizen imps that bricked me up down below."

"Now, mine tear Tick," the old Jew invited, as he filled the glasses, "let us bledge ourselves dot ve vill poth stick py our pargains."

"I am with you," Crabber agreed.

"Vhel, t'en, here ish your health, your vealth, und our secret forever."

"Same to you," pledged Crabber, and the pair touched glasses and drank.

"What a nice little party that would be," thought Broadway Billy, "if I wasn't here. Two is company, but three is none, is th' sayin', an' I reckon it ain't fur out of th' way this time. What a red-hot old s'prise-party there will be by 'n' by, when me an' Speare gits ready ter pull th' string."

"Well," Crabber asked, "when do you want me to do this little job for you?"

"Yust as gwick as bossible," was the reply.

"Then I will lay my plans to get it over with as soon as I can. The sooner such work is out of hand the better. Then, when I have done my part, you do not want to fail with yours, or— you know Dick Crabber."

"Nefer fear but I vill do mine part, Crabber— nefer fear."

"That is all right, but I wanted to let you know that I would stand no fooling and no monkey tricks. And now I will be going, since you do not know when Plover will be in."

Some further unimportant conversation followed, and then Crabber took his leave.

"Now, Jewsharps, hug yerself and chuckle some more," the young detective enjoined, in thought, remembering how the Jew had acted after his interview with Plover.

So Mr. Levi did. As soon as Crabber was gone he threw himself back into his chair, and laughed heartily and long, but in silence.

"Goot! goot!" he presently exclaimed, in an undertone; "dot vill be yust bully. Plofer vill

put out of der vay t'e young man, und Crabber vill put out of der vay t'e young voman; und d'en I vill dake gare of dem. I vill give dem a trink of my goot vine dot vill put 'em to shleebe so sound dot dey von't nefer vake oop any more. Ha, ha, ha! Dey pe poth smart vellers, but dey ain't got up early enough for me."

"That's yer game, is it?" thought Broadway Billy. "I had an idee that you had some sort o' rotten trick ter play on 'em both, an' it is as pizen as you be yerself. But you won't do it, uncle, nary time, you won't. I think that I shall have something ter say about this thing afore it is all settled. Neither will th' other fellers git in their work on th' other ones, not if this court knows herself, and she think she do."

"It ish pooty dancherous peesness," the old money-lender continued to soliloquize, "but I hafe peen in dancherous peesness before, und I guess I shall come out all righdt. Efen if d'ose vellers ish caught, dey would hafe a hard dime to draw me into t'e trouble with them. I can lie like everyting, und t'e story dey would hafe to tell would sound so improbable that nobody would believe them. Oh, dey are in for it all, no matter how it goes with 'em."

"They won't be in for it alone, though, no matter how it goes, neither," the young detective in the chimney muttered, "fer you will be right inter it with 'em, you kin bet high on that. And now if th' show is over for this time, I think I will retire and report th' result of my investigation. Think you'll have any more company to-night, old rocks?"

This unspoken question was soon answered.

"Vell, I think I vill go py mine ped," the old Jew presently muttered, and he soon after got up, put out the light, and went out of the room.

"That settles it," thought Billy, "and now I may as well climb up my string an' take myself hence. It ain't likely that there will be any more fun for me here now in this room, an' Speare will be waitin' fer me ter report. Hold on, though, he won't be lookin' fer me till midnight, an' th' longer I stay here th' less likely I will be ter be seen when I do go out, so I may as well rest right her for a little while longer. Couldn't find Speare now anyhow, and it ain't likely that Crabber will undertake ter do his evil deed without some sort o' preparation fer it. Billy, we'll roost here a while longer, with your consent."

Bracing himself in the chimney with his legs and back, the boy drew up the rope and made a loop in it for his feet, and then when he had adjusted it he was in a comparatively comfortable place.

He settled back against the walls then, and gave play to his thoughts and imagination, and the next thing he knew he was wakened up out of a sound sleep by a sudden flash of light in his face.

"Sweet pertaters!" he came near exclaiming aloud, "if I haven't been asleep! A purty detective I am, and no mistake. What in th' world has been goin' on here? an' how long have I been in th' arms o' Murphy! This is about th' wu'st trick that I ever was guilty of, an' it won't never do fer it ter reach th' ears of Inspector Br— Hello! what is goin' on here?"

The flash of light that had come to his eyes came through the hole in the chimney from the room, and now Billy saw the pretty Jewess gliding across the floor with a lamp in her hand.

"Hang me if it ain't Becky," the boy told himself. "What is she up to at this hour? I think it must be midnight, ter judge by th' stiffness of my legs."

The girl moved silently, even stealthily, across the room, and finally stopped at its furthest side, at a point directly opposite to the hole in the chimney.

Billy's eyes were now open to their widest.

"What is in th' wind now?" was his self-put question. "I am willin' ter bet that there is somethin' up, an' somethin' big, too. It seems ter me that I can smell mystery now, an' smell it strong."

This room, by the way, was finished in hard wood, and all the walls were laid in in fancy figures. This Billy had noticed at the first, but had thought nothing of it any more than to admire it. Now, however, he soon understood why it was so.

The girl placed her hand on a certain figure of the wood-work, and in an instant a little door flew open, revealing behind it a hidden safe.

"Ha!" thought Billy, "she is goin' fer boodle."

When the outer door was open, the girl gave her attention to the door of the safe, reached far in and drew out a package of bills.

With this she returned to the table, and there sat down.

"I hate to do this," she meditated, in a low tone, "but how can I help it? I love poor Robert, and I pity him, and I feel it my duty to help him if I can. Father has plenty of money here, and he is so forgetful that he will never miss this when once I have changed the figures on his account-book."

While speaking she opened the package and began to count.

It took several minutes for her to run through it, but when she had done it, it was with a sigh of relief and a smile of satisfaction that she straightened up from the task.

"Just ten thousand dollars in the package," she mused, "and I can arrange the safe so that father will not miss it for months. It was only last week that he counted his money all over, and he will not do it again for six months or more. I am perfectly safe, and now I will change the figures on the book."

Going back to the safe she brought forth a book. This she opened, and in a moment had found the place she wanted.

"Here it is," she communed. "Six packages of ten thousand each." Now, as this is in my own hand-writing, I can change it without fear of detection, and if any question is raised, I can assure him that I remember well that it was five."

"Like father like son," reflected the young detective; "though in this case th' son happens ter be of th' female gender. No matter, though; it is all th' same, an' that purty gal has got bad blood in her. I allow it is fer a good cause she is takin' th' boodle, but it is stealin' none th' less, an' I am down on stealin', right from the word go. Now, she has no idee that anybody is lookin' at her, but if she ain't a heathen she ought ter know that th' eye of God is on her, an' that He is aware of her little game. That's what my old mammy impressed upon my mind afore I could walk, an' it has stuck to me ever since. An' if every boy an' girl an' man an' woman would jest fix th' same fact in their minds, there would be a heap less of crooked work goin' on in th' world than there is."

While musing thus, the boy did not take his eyes from the girl, but watched her every move.

"If she was only as good as she is purty," he thought, "she would be a angel, an' no mistake; but she is plannin' ter add a lie to her stealin', if it is found out, an' angels don't lie, I reckon. I can't say much on th' latter score, though, I reckon, fer I have been known ter stretch th' truth a little once in a while myself in a good cause."

With a firm and careful hand the girl made the alteration in the book, and then she returned it to the safe and shut the door. Not satisfied, however, she opened it again, and taking the light, made sure that everything in the safe was in proper order. This done, she shut and locked the door, and then closed the outer door in the wall.

"Well, if that boodle-nest ain't well hid, then I'm a Turk," thought Billy. "It holds quite a sum o' boodle, too, as I should think ter judge from th' fact that she said there was six packages of ten thousan' each, an' th' old man wasn't likely ter miss one of 'em. Must be a hundred thousan' at least. He's a reg'lar Crusbus."

Separating the package of money into two, the young woman thrust them into the bosom of her dress, and was ready to leave the room.

But she hesitated.

"This is my first crime," she meditated, "and I feel condemned. Shall I return the money and give it up?"

"Best thing you kin do," thought Billy.

"Shall I put it back?" she repeated. "Shall I put it back when the man I love needs it so badly, and when my father is so unjust to him? Never! I am convinced that my father did not gain it all in the most honorable way, and he has more than enough without this. I will take it and carry out my purpose."

With this she picked up her lamp, turned it very low, and glided from the room as silently as a ghost.

"Ther deed is done," ejaculated Billy, "an' now I reckon my work here is done, too. I was sorry ter see th' gal give way to th' temptation, fer her logic don't make th' crime any th' less, an' now she's a thief. Now, th' next thing is ter git out o' here an' find Speare. It must be purty late, fer I am as stiff as an old hoss."

CHAPTER XIII.

SPEARE IN A BAD FIX.

THE young detective disengaged his feet from the loop in the rope into which he had put them, and began to climb upward.

He found it much easier work now than he had on the first occasion, and in a few minutes he was at the top of the chimney.

"Once more I breathe th' mounting air," he gushed, as his head came out at the top, "an' I reckon it mount be a good deal fresher 'n it is, too," he added. "Th' air o' Gotham don't 'mount ter much fer freshness, though, an' 'specially over th' den of a p'izen old Jew."

Pulling himself out of the chimney he dropped down to the roof, and then drew up the rope.

"S'pose I could let myself down from th' roof of this house jest as well as I kin from that other one," he mused, "but I reckon I had better not do it. I have been over th' other ground an' know somethin' about it, but here I might find th' yard all bolted an' barred up, as it no doubt is, an' a big dog on duty. Oh, no, thank you; I think I'll go th' same old way."

With this wise decision the boy untied the rope from the chimney, wound it up, and started for the other house.

Arriving there, he lost no time in making the rope fast, and satisfying himself that it was safe, he slipped over the edge of the roof and went down.

When he reached the ground he drew the rope tight and fastened the end of it to a near-by water drain, leaving it there, since he could do no better with it; and this done, he went to the fence and climbed over into the alley.

In a few minutes more he was safely out upon the street.

"Rah fer our side!" he cried half aloud, the moment he had fastened the gate behind him. "Bound ter win, every time! I would like to see them put this chicken in a hole that he couldn't git out of. No I wouldn't, neither, so that's a lie; but all th' same I don't believe they kin do it. I have been inter th' wu'st old fixes that was ever heard of, an' here I am yet. They sot out this time ter do me up but they are likely ter git left, an' git left bad, too. What time kin it be?"

Starting off immediately at a rapid walk, he set out for the place where he had agreed to meet Speare at midnight.

For all he knew, it might be hours past that time now.

Presently he came to a drug-store that was open all night, and there he saw a clock in the window. It was just a quarter to twelve.

"I have got ter hurry, ter be there on time," he declared, and he increased his speed.

A moment later he was stopped rather abruptly. A policeman stuck his night club out in front of him, saying:

"Hold on, young man, don't be in too great a rush; I want to have a word with you."

"All right," answered Billy, stopping short; "fire away."

"Where are you going?" the officer asked.

"Home," was the brief reply.

"And where do you live?"

Billy gave his correct address.

"Where have you been to get so black?" was the next question.

"Ye wouldn't expect ter see a feller come out of th' coal-hole of a steamer in a biled shirt an' choker, would ye?" the lad counterquestioned.

"Oh! you're a coal-heaver, are you? Why didn't you say so in the first place?"

"Why didn't you ask?" the boy retorted; "it was you that was doin' th' questionin'."

"Don't you be too fly, or I will scoop you in."

"Scoop ahead if ye want ter, but I don't see what you will do it fer. Is that all ye want o' me?"

"Yes; so git."

Billy 'got,' and increased his pace still more to make up for the time lost.

When he reached the appointed place the detective was not to be seen. Nor could the boy find any proof that he had been there.

It had been agreed upon between them that if one or the other should get there first, and for some reason could not wait, he should leave a brief message on the sidewalk in chalk for the other to see.

Billy could find no such communication anywhere, and so made up his mind that his friend had not yet arrived.

He waited half an hour, and then as Speare did not come, made up his mind that something had happened to hinder him, and resolved not to wait any longer; so taking a piece of chalk from his pocket he stooped down and wrote—

"O. K. HOME."

B. B."

"There," he thought, "that will tell him that I am all right, an' that I have gone home; an' he kin make anything out o' th' B. B. that he wants ter."

With this the boy went home, and the night rolled on.

In the mean time what of the detective?

When he and Billy parted, the former went at once to the hotel where Robert Walton was stopping. He wanted to see him to warn him to look out for Hiram Plover.

But he was too late, for Robert had gone out; and he had been called out by a decoy message from the man who intended to take his life.

Speare was greatly disappointed not to find him in, and feared that the evil scheme was already at work. And when he had questioned the clerk and learned that a message had been received by the young man, and that he had gone out immediately after, he felt certain that his suspicion was correct.

"Can you let me into his room with a pass-key?" he asked the clerk; and he showed his badge as he spoke.

"If it is necessary," the clerk answered.

"It is," Speare declared. "I am not working against Mr. Walton," he explained, "but for him; and I may be able to learn something in his room that will give me a clew toward finding him."

This settled it, and the clerk went up to the room with him and allowed him to look around.

On the floor, and the first thing to catch the eye of the detective, was an envelope, which the clerk recognized as the one that had come for Mr. Walton only a short time before.

Speare looked all around carefully, and stepped up to the open grate and looked into that. And there lay what he most hoped to find—the message which the envelope had contained.

Eagerly he snatched it up and read it. It purported to be from Rebeckah Levi, and called the young man to meet her at once at the corner of two mentioned streets.

"This may be all right," Speare observed, remembering what Broadway Billy had told him, "but I fear it is not, and I shall hasten to this place at once."

He left the hotel in haste and hurried to the place named in the note, eager to learn the truth of the matter and to protect his client if he was in danger.

When he approached the corner a suggestive scene burst suddenly upon his vision. There was a carriage at the curb, and a man was approaching it. Suddenly two other men sprung out into view, threw themselves upon the first, and, after a very short struggle, he was forced into the carriage and it rolled rapidly away, the other men having climbed in too.

Speare was near enough to witness this, but too far away to interfere, so all he could now do was to give chase. And that he did. He was a good runner, and he started after the carriage at his best speed.

The corner where this had taken place was at that hour of the evening deserted, and the cowardly assault was witnessed by no one save the detective.

At one corner a policeman attempted to stop Speare, but a word and a momentary display of his badge were all that was necessary to put an end to the policeman's inquiry.

On the carriage rolled, until it entered one of the very worst quarters of the town, and there it stopped before a dark and grim-looking old house.

Speare was now nearly out of breath, and was glad the race was ended. He reduced his pace to a walk, and silently approached the carriage from behind, keeping well in the shadows.

As he drew near he saw the two men take the third one out of the carriage, now in a helpless condition, and carry him into the house, and the carriage drove away immediately.

The detective hurried forward, and trying the door, found that it was not fastened.

Opening it, he passed stealthily in, and then, guided by the sound of voices, made his way down to the basement floor.

The house was unoccupied and was entirely unfurnished, and a more uninviting place can hardly be imagined.

At the foot of the basement stairs the detective stopped, and there prepared to look and listen.

The three men before him were Hiram Plover, Dennis Meggins, and their victim, Robert Walton. The latter was lying on the floor unconscious.

"How d'ye intind ter do fer him?" inquired Meggins. "Are ye goin' ter stick him like ye would a pig?"

"No, it will not pay to do that," answered Plover, "for blood is a bad thing to meddle with, and it would get on us. We will tie him

up good, hands and feet and limbs, and leave him here to die about the same as we left the boy."

"Jest ez you say," agreed Meggins; "trot out yer rope."

Plover brought out a rope, evidently a clothes-line, judging by its length; and this was wound around and around the form of the unconscious man until it was out of human possibility that he could ever get free unaided. And not more than half of the rope was used, either.

Speare left the steps and went along the hall, resolved to stay there until the men had gone away and then to release their prisoner.

"D'ye think he is safe?" Meggins asked, when they had done.

"I should say so," answered Plover, with a laugh. "He will stay right here. This house belongs to old Levi, and is not likely to be opened soon, and some day I will come here and bury the bones. Come, let's be going."

They had a candle with them to light their way, and when they came out into the hall the detective drew as far back as possible into the shadows to escape being seen.

Fate, however, was against him. When the rascals stepped out into the hall, Plover turned his eyes in that direction, and he saw that there was a witness to his crime.

With a curse he blew out the candle and sprung forward, calling to his helper to follow, and despite the fact that the detective sent a bullet or two flying in their direction, they were soon upon him and he was overpowered.

This done, Plover dealt him a blow on the head that knocked him senseless, and then relighted the candle. Then he saw for the first time who his new prisoner really was, and was happy. This was better luck than he had dreamed of, for it had been to Speare, as well as to Broadway Billy, that his friend had been sent to prison; and in a few minutes the detective was bound as securely as Walton.

CHAPTER XIV.

PLOVER AND CRABBER EXCHANGE NOTES.

WHEN Broadway Billy came out next morning, he was, in appearance, a new boy. He was washed and combed, had on clean clothes, and was "spick and span" from top to toe.

His first business was to go to the corner stand to see Skinny.

When he arrived there he found the junior partner open for business, and every thing in proper order.

"Hello, fatty, how is business?" Billy cried, as he came up.

"No thanks ter you that it ain't goin' ter th' dogs," Skinny returned in a rather blunt way.

"All th' more credit ter you, then, my fat partner," declared Billy, laughing.

"Well, has th' fever broke yet?" Skinny inquired.

"Bless ye, no," cried Billy; "it is jest about gettin' up to its hight. It is goin' ter run its full course, sure."

"Then you had better go right on, fer you ain't no good here while th' fever is on ye."

"Oh, I am goin', so don't worry yourself about that. I kem around ter say that if Detective Speare comes 'round here ye kin tell him that I am all right an' that I am lookin' for him."

"All right."

"Well, then, so long, Skinny; don't over-work yourself, fer ye might be taken down suddenly with a collapse o' fat 'round th' heart, an' it would be fatal."

With this remark and a hearty laugh Billy ran off, and set out then to find the detective.

He went right to his office first, to learn whether he had been there or not, and found that he had not been seen. The office boy said that he would certainly be there at nine o'clock, though, as he had a very important engagement at that hour; so Billy sat down and waited.

Nine o'clock came, and so did the man with whom the detective had the important engagement, but not so Speare. Nor had he arrived at ten.

Billy hastened away, satisfied that something was wrong.

When they had parted company on the previous night, Billy knew that Speare was going to see Robert Walton at the hotel where he was stopping, and, fortunately, Billy knew what hotel that was.

Thither he went with all haste, and on arriving, asked the clerk first for Mr. Walton, thinking that if he found him he might be able to tell him something about Speare; but when he learned what had taken place on the previous night he grew more alarmed than ever.

"There's a p'izen diffikilty abroad in th' land, that is sure," he muttered as he walked away

from the hotel. "Speare is either in trouble, or else he is on a big trail an' can't give it up. Which is it? I'd give my best boots ter know, but how am I ter find out? All I know is that Mr. Walton got a note an' went out, an' that th' detective kem here a little later an' set out ter find him. An' that is about all I am likely ter find out, too, I guess, fer I haven't the shadder of a clew ter go ter work on. What be I ter do? Shall I go an' tell th' inspector about it? No, I reckon not jest yet. If Speare is dead that won't help him, an' if he is all right he might not like it. No, I will wait one day, anyhow, and then if he don't show up it will be time ter set th' p'lice onter th' trail. I needn't be idle, though, fer I have got ter go an' look after Dick Crabber an' see that he don't carry out his part o' th' programme."

With this in his mind the boy set out upon the work with a will.

Banker Hastings had been gone down to his office about an hour, on the morning of which we write, when a cab drew up and stopped in front of his residence, and the driver ran up the steps, rung the bell, and delivered a letter.

The letter was for the banker's daughter, Minnie, and purported to be from her father. It requested her to come at once to his office in the cab sent, but did not mention what she was wanted for.

"This is very strange," the young lady mused, "for father never sent for me like this before. Can it be that he is ill? No, for the writing and the signature are his. It must be something important, and I will go immediately."

In a few moments she was ready, and ran out to get into the cab. Before she did get in, however, she took the precaution to ask the driver a question. There was evidently a grain of suspicion in her mind.

"You know where to drive me to?" was what she asked.

"Yes'm," was the answer.

"Where?"

"Down ter Hastings's banking house."

"That is right."

Now satisfied, the young lady got in and the cab rattled away.

For some time the driver kept on in the right direction, and the girl had no cause for suspicion or alarm. Suddenly, though, the cab stopped, the door was flung open, and a man sprung in. This was done in one brief moment, and before the girl had time to make an outcry the man had his hand over her mouth and was pressing a damp sponge to her nose, while the cab rattled on.

This man was Dick Crabber.

When the cab stopped finally, it was before a mean-looking little house away up on the west side of the town.

Down sprung the driver and opened the door, and then Crabber and he lifted out the now unconscious girl and carried her into the house, giving her into the care of an old woman and her son, the latter a hideous-looking creature deformed and crippled.

"Take good care of the beauty," Crabber ordered, "and see that she does not get away from you. If she does, you will have to answer for it. I will be here to-morrow."

"He, he, he!" the old woman croaked, "she can't never git 'way from old Mother Hawk; never you fear!"

"See that she don't, that's all," Crabber cautioned, and with that injunction he went out and entered the cab and was driven back downtown.

About the same time when Minnie Hastings was being carried away in the cab, Rebeckah Levi was on her way to the Walton mansion.

When she reached her destination she asked to see Robert Walton.

In her hand she carried a small package.

She was informed that he was no longer there, and that Mr. Richards, too, was out, just then.

Inquiring where she could find Robert, one of the servants was able to tell her that he had taken up his quarters for the present at a downtown hotel, naming the one, and the pretty Jewess set out at once to go there.

When she arrived there, however, she was doomed to disappointment again. Mr. Walton was not in, and she could not learn when he would be.

Leaving a sealed note for him, in which she said that she would call again at the same hour next day, the girl returned home.

And now let us get back to Broadway Billy. With him the forenoon was an entire loss. He

spent most of his time, after leaving the hotel, in watching the house of the old money-lender, hoping to catch a sight of either Plover or Crabber.

"This is about th' dryest old still-hunt I ever heard of," he complained to himself, as the afternoon, too, began to wear on. "There don't seem ter be any game at all. An' I am 'most worried ter death about Speare. Where in th' dickens kin he be? I am strong tempted ter go an' onwind th' thing to Inspector Br— Hello! here's somethin' at last!"

Hiram Plover had just come out of the house and started up the street.

Billy had affixed a false mustache to his lip, and had on a pair of kid gloves and was carrying a cane, so he had little fear of being recognized.

He set out at once to follow the man, keeping at a safe distance away, fully determined to know where he was going, and what his business was.

Not a great distance had Plover gone when he met Dick Crabber.

It was a chance meeting, and the two shook hands warmly, and stopped to talk.

Billy dared not approach too close, and he was glad when, in a few minutes, the pair of rascals entered a saloon near at hand.

In a moment the boy followed them in boldly, and without taking notice of any one, seemingly, took a seat directly behind them, with his face from them.

Crabber and Plover looked at him as he came in, but when he had taken a seat, they paid no further attention to him.

Billy called for a glass of soda, for we are proud to say he drank nothing of greater strength, and settled down in his chair as though ready for a nap. But he was far from sleeping, and his keen ears were alert for every word he could catch.

For some time he could not overhear anything, for the two men conversed in very cautious tones, but at last he heard Plover remark:

"You and I have been good friends for a long time, Crabber, and I think you could trust me with your little secret."

"I'm afraid you won't congratulate me if I do," Crabber objected.

"Yes, I will, pard, on my honor," avowed Plover.

"Well, I am going to get married."

"The deuce you are! Who is to be the fair one, if I may ask?"

"It—and you must keep it mum for a time—is none other than Rebeckah Levi, the daughter of your worthy employer."

Plover sat up as suddenly as though he had been jabbed with a pin.

"How do you know you are?" he demanded.

"I have the old man's word for it," answered Crabber, smiling.

"And so have I his word that she shall be mine," averred Plover.

"The dickens you have!"

What followed then was so animated and profane that it will not bear repeating here. Suffice it to say that the old Jew's double-dealing came out, and the two men saw that they were being used as mere tools in his hands. They explained their cases to each other, and vowed vengeance against him.

Broadway Billy took it all in, for they were less guarded in their talk after they became excited.

"Where have you got the two men?" Crabber presently asked.

"In one of the old Jew's houses, No. —, — street," answered Plover.

This was what the boy detective had been aching to learn.

"And what will you do with them now?"

"Leave 'em right there, I guess," was the reply. "Where have you got the girl he hired you to remove?"

Crabber told him, but gave a false address, and Billy stored that away in his memory-box, too. And then the two rascals fell to plotting their revenge upon the Jew. They planned to rob him at a not far distant day; Plover was to steal Rebeckah and force her to marry him; Crabber would do the same with Minnie Hastings, and then they would get out of the country as soon as they could. In the mean time they would not let the old Jew suspect that his little game was known to them.

CHAPTER XV.

BILLY ON HIS MUSCLE.

"SWEET pertaters!"

So exclaimed Broadway Billy, when he came out of the saloon, some minutes after the men had taken their departure.

"Th' flag still waves," he cried exultantly, as he hurried away, an' I am on top o' th' heap once more. Now there will be music in th' air, we bet! If I don't give 'em a surprise-party then I am N. G. An' now th' fu'st thing fer me ter do is ter go an' git Speare an' young Walton out of their diffikilty."

He lost no time in making his way to the house where they were confined.

When he arrived there he looked around for some means of getting in, but as it was daylight he could not easily find any.

At length an idea came to him, and away he ran to carry it out. He went to a locksmith who had a shop not far from that neighborhood, and telling a good and plausible story about a lost key, came away victoriously with a whole ring of keys on his arm.

The boy's appearance was now far different from what it had been on the previous night, and no one would think of questioning him.

When he got back to the house he began to try the keys, and as good fortune was with him he did not have to waste a great deal of time before he found one that let him in.

Once within, he shut and locked the door from the inside and then set out to find the prisoners.

He had an idea, from his own experience, perhaps, that he would find them on the basement floor or in the cellar, so he went down there first, and sure enough, when he entered the front room of the basement there he saw them lying on the floor, bound and gagged as they had been left.

"Sweet pertaters!" he cried, "but you are a purty-lookin' pair o' birds, now ain't ye. What be ye doin' here? You are tied up wuss'n two turkeys tied up fer th' oven. I am 'shamed of ye, an' no mistake."

Taking out his knife the boy cut the ropes here and there, and in a few moments the two men were free. But it was some minutes more before they could stand or speak.

"Thank God!" were the first words the detective uttered, and they were spoken in a heartfelt tone. "You have saved our lives, Broadway Billy," he added, "and I shall never forget it. I had no hopes, for I could see no way that you could get a clew to where we were. How did you find us?"

Billy told his story, and the detective praised him highly for what he had done.

"You are bound to be a detective," he declared, "and one of marked ability, too."

In about an hour, when the two men had got the stiffness out of their limbs and had made themselves presentable for the street, the three left the house, and the boy returned the keys to the shop where he had borrowed them.

They then went to the hotel where Robert Walton had his room, and retired to that room to lay their plans of action.

There Walton found the note that had been left for him by the pretty Jewess, and Billy had another story to tell of what he had seen while in the chimney.

"I will induce her to replace the money where she found it," avowed Walton, "and we will not let it become known."

"That is the thing to do," agreed the detective, "for it is evidently her first step in the wrong direction. But," he added, "what will you do with her love?"

"I am sorry for her," Walton answered, "but I can never be anything to her."

"You want to look out that she don't turn against you, then, and deal you a blow from behind," the detective cautioned.

Billy had still another chapter to unfold to them, and this was concerning the girl that Dick Crabber had abducted.

"What is the girl's name?" Robert Walton asked, as the boy had not given it.

"It is Minnie Hastings," was the reply.

Walton sprung to his feet in frenzy.

"It is the woman I love!" he cried. "We must go to her rescue instantly!"

The detective soon outlined a plan of action, and having assigned Billy to his part, set out with Walton to the rescue of Minnie Hastings.

When they reached the house to which Billy had directed them, however, they found that it was unoccupied. The truth was, Crabber, for reasons of his own, had not given the correct address to Plover, as we have seen.

Speare went to the nearest station, got some policemen, and had the house broken open and thoroughly searched, but no one was to be found, and there was nothing to indicate that there had been any one in the house for months.

"What shall we do?" groaned Walton.

"Shall we notify the police?"

"You can do that if you want to," answered the detective, "but I think that I can bring it out all right if you will let me handle it alone."

You see Crabber evidently lied to his friend Plover, and so the boy got hold of a false number. All I have to do, however, is to get upon Crabber's trail and shadow him, and that is all the police could do."

"Very well," agreed Walton, "I trust it all to you."

"And I will try to prove myself worthy of the trust," the detective promised. "You return to the hotel," he added, "and keep out of sight until you hear from me, and then we will wind the business up."

Walton agreed to do so, and they parted.

Broadway Billy had been sent to watch the house where the detective and Walton had been confined. It was thought that perhaps Plover would call there to finish his work, and if he should he would find that his prisoners had got away. This would be warning enough for him, and he would get out of the way as soon as he could. So Billy's instructions were to have him arrested at once if he came there. This covered one point in the game.

The detective himself set out to find and shadow Dick Crabber, knowing that sooner or later he would lead the way to the house where the young lady was imprisoned.

And while these two were at work, Robert Walton remained in his room, every hour seeming an age to him. The night passed, and nothing was heard from the detective nor from the boy. When morning came, however, he got a telegram from the detective, telling him to keep up his spirits and remain out of sight and wait, adding that there was every hope of success.

Later on, when the young man was pacing the floor in a fever of impatience, there came a light rap at his door, and on opening it he found Rebeckah Levi there.

"You see I am promptly on time," she said, "and I see that you are waiting for me as I requested you to."

The truth was, the young man had forgotten all about her.

"Come in," he invited. "I got your note, and I could but wonder what you can want to see me for."

The girl stepped in and shut the door, and then sat down.

"I am here to do you a favor," she began, coming right to business. "I want to make you a present of enough money to discharge your debt to my father. Will you accept it?"

"I cannot do so," the young man answered, speaking gently but firmly.

"Oh! do not refuse it," the girl cried. "I have brought it to you because—because I—I love you. My father first put it into my head to try to win you, and I soon found that I loved you with all my heart. I tell you this because I cannot help it, and to show you why I desire to help you. Now please take this money."

"I am sorry for you," returned Robert, "but I must refuse. I am not ungrateful, far from it; but the sum is so large that I am obliged to think that it is not yours to give. I can never return the passion you feel for me, for my heart is already in the keeping of another; so pray take my advice, return the money to your father's safe, and forget me."

The girl turned pale and trembled.

"How do you know that I took it from his safe?" she asked.

"I know of no other way in which you could get so large a sum of money. And if this is true I hope that you will replace the money without delay. Do so before it is missed, and your crime will never be known. I tell you plainly that I cannot touch it."

The pretty Jewess burst into tears.

"You have guessed aright," she confessed, "but it was done because of my love for you. Forgive me, and I will take your advice and put it back where I took it from."

"I have nothing to forgive, you must go to your Maker for that; but I promise that I will never mention it."

"Thank you; and now will you tell me who it is that you love?"

The young man hesitated a moment before replying to this, but feeling sure that girl was asking with no evil motive, he answered:

"Her name is Minnie Hastings."

The Jewess sprang to her feet with an almost scream.

"Minnie Hastings!" she repeated; "she is in deadly peril, for she is in the hands of an evil man. I cared nothing about it before, but now I will save her for you or die."

Before the young man could ask anything, the girl had thrown open the door and was hurrying down-stairs, leaving him in even a worse state of perplexity and impatience than she had found him.

She went straight home, and to her father's business-room. There was no one there, as it happened, and she locked the door after her as she went in. Then she opened the safe, put into it the package of money, closed and locked it again, and hurried out.

In a few minutes more she was on her way up town via the Elevated.

Within half an hour she was at the very house where Crabber had left the young lady, and when she pulled the bell the old woman came to the door.

"Well, what d'ye want?" was demanded.

"Is Crabber here yet?" the girl asked.

"No, he ain't."

"That is queer," the Jewess commented, "for I expected to meet him. You are to show me to the room where the girl is, and I will wait there till he comes."

"Who says so?" the woman demanded.

"Crabber said so, of course," answered the girl, impatiently. "Show me to the room at once."

"Well, I'll show ye there," said the woman, "but mind ye'll have ter stay right there till Crabber does come."

With this she allowed the Jewess to enter, and conducted her up-stairs to the room where Minnie Hastings was imprisoned.

"Oh! there you are, are you?" Rebeckah exclaimed, when her eyes fell upon the prisoner. "I'm sent to keep you company till your master comes."

As the girl said this she uttered a harsh laugh and the old woman thought that she was indeed some person sent there by the rascally Crabber.

"You're all right, I guess," the old hag observed, "but all th' same I'll have ter lock ye in, fer I can't take no chances on th' gal's gittin' away."

"That's all right, I'm not kicking," returned Rebeckah, in a flippant tone; and so the woman shut the door and turned the key upon them.

CHAPTER XVI.

SETTLING ACCOUNTS.

"Who are you?" inquired the prisoner, as soon as the old woman's step had died away.

In low tones, then, the Jewess told her the whole story, concluding:

"I have come here to protect you until that wretch comes, when I will force him to release you. See, I have a pistol with me."

"But, how did you know where to find me?" asked Minnie.

"Why, I overheard Crabber telling a boon companion last night; but not knowing who you were nor anything about you, I paid little attention to it."

"And now you have come to rescue me because you—you—"

"Because I love the man who loves you," was the outspoken reply, "and I do this to show him how much I love him."

Their conversation was presently interrupted by loud voices and heavy steps on the stairs. One voice was Crabber's, and he was evidently in no gentle frame of mind. The others were the voices of the old woman and her son.

The door of the room was soon thrown open, and Crabber bounded into the presence of the two girls.

"What in blazes are you doing here?" he demanded of the Jewess.

"I am here to protect this young lady and to defy you," was the calm and steady response. And as she uttered the words, the girl drew a revolver from her pocket and aimed it straight at the villain's heart.

Crabber was for the time held at bay.

"You had better drop that plaything," he hissed, "or it will be the worse for you."

"It will be much worse for you if you advance another foot toward us," the girl cautioned.

It was too bad that the girl had not shown better judgment in the work she had undertaken, for if she had only thought to bring a policeman with her she could have carried her point. As it was— But, let us not anticipate.

For some moments there was an awkward pause, and then, with the suddenness of the leap of a panther, Crabber sprang forward to grasp the weapon and snatch it from the girl's hand.

One fatal instant the girl hesitated to shoot, and then the wretch was upon her, and her arm was struck down. In the struggle that followed the revolver was discharged, and with a groan the pretty Jewess sunk down upon the floor with a bullet in her side.

"Oh! what have you done?" cried Minnie, in great alarm and anguish.

"It was her own fault," was the brutal answer, "an' it serves her right."

Just then a great crash was heard below, fol-

lowed by a heavy tread of feet upon the stairs, and the next instant three or four policemen were in the room, and Dick Crabber and his two helpers were prisoners.

The man who led the police was Detective Speare, and he stooped down to see how badly the pretty Jewess was hurt. He found that the bullet had entered her right side, and that the wound was bleeding freely.

One of the policemen was sent to call an ambulance, and was told at the same time to send a cab to take Miss Hastings home. These two vehicles were soon at hand, and the young ladies were provided for. And then the prisoners were taken to the nearest station and locked up.

Detective Speare went immediately to the hotel where Robert Walton was, to inform him that the young lady was safe, and then he set out at once to find Broadway Billy.

Billy was at his post, and was glad enough to see the detective and to hear what had been done.

"An' now it is time that we went fer th' rest of 'em," he cried. "We want ter drop down onter that old Jewsharp like a ton o' bricks an' scoop him right in. We order make up a little s'prise-party for 'em, though, an' let 'em down hard. What d'ye say ter that?"

"That is a good idea," the detective agreed, "and it is something that I like. We will see what can be done."

About nine o'clock that evening the old money-lender was pacing to and fro in his business-room, wondering where his "pelofed taughter" could be, when there came a knock at the door.

"Coom een," the old rascal invited, thinking that it must be Plover whom he had sent out to look for Rebeckah.

The door opened, and into the room came four policemen, bringing with them Plover, Crabber, and Dennis Meggins, all handcuffed.

"Peard of mine father!" gasped the old Shylock, as he clasped his hands together in terror: "vhat ish t'e meaning of dis, shentlemen?"

"You will soon learn," answered one of the policemen. "Sit right down there and hold your peace."

The three prisoners looked crestfallen and unhappy, and Crabber had a gag in his mouth so that he could not speak. This was to prevent him from telling Plover that Detective Speare was out of the meshes in which he had left him.

Chairs were placed in a row at the side of the Jew, and the prisoners were made to sit down upon them. This done the officer in charge said:

"Mr. Levi, these men have been brought here to meet some persons in your house, and to face you in the evil plots you have been concocting with—"

"So help me, shentlemens, I—"

"There, that will do, for it will not help you any to lie. Your little game is up, and you will spend the rest of the summer up the river."

The old Jew tried hard to talk, but was not allowed to do so, and when he was at last silenced the officer turned to Plover and Meggins.

"I have the pleasure," he said, "of introducing you to two gentlemen who will appear against you at your trial;" and as he spoke he opened the door and in walked, much to their surprise, Detective Speare and Robert Walton.

"Quite a surprise, isn't it," remarked the detective, as he looked them in the eyes in a way that made them tremble. "This world is full of surprises, though," he added, as he stepped forward and took the gag out of Crabber's mouth, "and I have another for you. Allow me to present my youthful friend and helper, Broadway Billy."

Billy sprang into the room as his name was spoken, and the expressions that struck the faces of the three men cannot be described. They sunk back into their seats helpless and speechless.

Billy looked from one to the other of them for some moments before he spoke.

"Well," he presently exclaimed, "if you ain't a purty set o' rascals, then I give it up. Where d'ye expect ter die when ye go to, anyhow? This does my heart good, this does, an' no mistake. Thought ye had it all yer own way when ye bricked me up in th' chimney, didn't ye? But ye didn't, not by a good deal. You can't kill me, an' th' sooner ye all find that out th' better it will be fer yer health. When ye git up th' river where yer friend Carter is, ye kin tell him that ye tackled Willyum o' Broadway an' got th' wu'st of th' fight by several majority. I reckon that you'll all agree that this is some-thin' of a s'prise-party, eh?"

"How in blazes did you get out?" demanded

Plover, seeing that there was no use in trying to deny the charges.

"That will be somethin' fer ye ter puzzle yer minds over," the boy answered, with a laugh. "I did get out, an' that is enough fer you ter know. Broadway Billy never got inter a hole yet that he didn't git out of, an' th' 'pearances o' things goes ter intercate that he never will."

"The success of this whole arrest depends entirely upon this boy," declared the detective, "and I and Mr. Walton here owe our lives to him."

"Draw it gently," requested Billy.

"Not a bit of it!" the detective cried. "The honor of the case belongs to you, and you shall have it all."

Billy was the hero of the hour, and the center of attraction when the trial came off. And he succeeded in sending every one of the men to prison for terms varying from ten to twenty years.

The old Jew died in prison in a short time, and as soon as his daughter was entirely well she took his wealth and went to spend the rest of her life in Europe. She had acted a noble as well as an ignoble part, and it is to be hoped that she may be happy.

It came to light, thanks to the work of Detective Speare, that Henry Richards, the lawyer, and the witnesses, had made up a false will, and the true will was found. In it two-thirds of the property had been left to Robert and one-third to Henry. This put a new face upon the matter, and Robert took charge of the old mansion, while Henry and his accomplices went on an extended voyage up the Hudson.

Some time later Robert Walton and Minnie Hastings were married, and their home is one of the happiest in all the world.

Broadway Billy is still the same happy and jolly boy. He and Skinny are yet in business, and as long as Billy can keep the detective fever off, Skinny thinks he is a paragon of business and brain. But Skinny lives in constant dread that the fever will break out again at any moment, and he knows full well that when it does there will be no more stopping it until it has run its course. Billy and Detective Speare are on the best of good terms, as why should they not be? and the detective declares that Billy is as good a partner as he ever worked with. Billy has many friends, new and old, and is one of the happiest boys in all Gotham.

"I'm doin' business at th' old stand," Billy declares, "an' am always ready ter see my friends at any time. An' if any p'izen crooked work crops out an' I git wind of it, you kin bet that I am goin' ter take a hand in it. That is, a hand in it ter take th' kinks out of it an' set th' diffikilty straight. I wasn't born rich ner han'some, an' I ain't got much brain; but when it comes ter snatchin' th' mask off o' rascality, no matter what th' race, color, sex, or previous condition may be, I am on my muscle every time."

THE END.

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